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SELECTIONS FROM THE
POETRY OF JOHN PAYNE



John Payne

SELECTIONS FROM
THE POETRY OF
JOHN PAYNE

MADE BY TRACY & LUCY ROBINSON
WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
LUCY ROBINSON



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INTRODUCTION

By LUCY ROBINSON

THE publication of this, the first selected edition of Payne's verse, is an appeal to all lovers of poetry on behalf of one of its uncrowned kings—widely known, it is true, as a translator, but as a poet receiving less than insular recognition.

For years we have pored over his five published volumes with wonder and delight; nor have we been able to understand how the English-speaking world can so long have remained in comparative ignorance of their author's genius. At last, upon the publication in London, by the Villon Society, of two quarto volumes, bearing the date 1902 and the title, "The Poetical Works of John Payne," in a limited numbered edition, we have asked for and have been granted permission to offer to American readers such of the poems as in our opinion shall awaken interest and stimulate desire for more. The Villon edition embraces some five thousand lines of new matter, thrown off for the most part between the months of January and March 1902, during a marked visitation of the muse immediately following the completion of an exhaustive translation of the works of the Persian poet Hafiz—a task that for nine years had absorbed the powers, bodily and mental, of the retired London solicitor.

The early poems, reproduced with but slight verbal alterations and few additional lines in the "Poetical Works," consisted of "The Masque of Shadows, and Other Poems," 1870; "Intaglios," 1871; "Songs of Life and Death," 1872; "Lautrec," 1878; "New Poems," 1880. Among the first to feel the charm of the new singer—who was born in London, August 23rd, 1842—were Matthew Arnold and the aged poet Horne—the former highly commending his work; the latter protesting almost fiercely against the reading world's apparent indifference to it. Indeed, it was the established men of the period—Tennyson, Browning, Rossetti, above all Swinburne and Theodore Watts-Dunton—who gave to John Payne the unhesitating reception his first ventures deserved; whereas, to a certain extent, the men of his own generation have stood aloof, as if conscious of having little in common with a writer unaccustomed by nature or habit to "the sweet uses of advertisement," and shrinking irresistibly from the electric glare cast by cheap journalism. At a period when an author's personality seems of more importance than anything he may utter, we do not hesitate to say that, could the poetry and personality of John Payne be no less vigorously advertised than were Rossetti's, the "Intaglios" and "Ballad of Isobel" would become, to say the least, as familiar to readers far and wide as the sonnets and "Blessed Damozel" of the latter poet.

But while Mr. Payne's lack of acquaintance with journalists and journalism has been such as to keep his work in the background, nevertheless the leading journals and critics, not only of England but of France, accorded him from the first an appreciation genuine and discriminating as it was unstinted. *The Westminster Review*,

one of the most independent and self-centred of English literary organs, observed at different periods :—

“Mr. Payne belongs to that small body of cultivated men who will probably be the glory of Victorian literature. . . . We gladly welcome Mr. Payne amongst that select number of poets that already comprises such names as Rossetti, Swinburne and Morris. . . . The art of ballad-writing has long been lost in England, and Mr. Payne may claim to be its restorer. . . . He may not be popular with the blind multitude, but he is sure to be so with all lovers of poetry, both to-day and to-morrow. . . . Posterity will place him between Tennyson and William Morris, side by side with Swinburne and D. G. Rossetti.”

The Athenæum declared :—

“There can be no question that Mr. Payne is a poet. Even in these days, when the accomplishment of verse is so common, the poet is just as distinguishable as he ever was from the prose-writer who has ‘learned the trick.’ The power of looking at the world through the glamour that floats before the poet’s eyes is not to be taught, and it cannot be denied that herein Mr. Payne’s endowment is exceptional.”

The Academy said of “New Poems” : “Mr. Payne has proved himself to be a master of his art. The present volume is an advance in power upon its predecessors, even as each one of them had been upon its forerunner.”

From *The Spectator* we quote : “Really beautiful verse, modulated with quite exquisite skill, and adorned with a marvellous wealth of the richest word-painting, of varied imagery and delicate fancy. The power shown in ‘Salvestra’ it would be difficult to exaggerate.”

La Renaissance reviewed “Songs of Life and Death”

at length, declaring that, to borrow the poet's own language: "Il a pressé son cœur comme une grappe mûre, et il en est coulé de la poésie—de la vraie poésie." Doubtless, the reviewer had in mind the despairing protest in "Shadow-Soul":—

*"There was great love in this man's soul!
Ay, bitter, crushed-out wine of love
Pressed out upon his every word."*

In an extended review in *Le National* Théodore de Banville exclaimed: "Mr. John Payne a publié trois livres délicieux," and dwelt upon the "chant magnifique composé pour la France pendant l'hiver de 1870-71. Quel courage il y avait alors à élever, seul, la voix pour nous, seul dans l'Angleterre et peut-être dans l'Europe." The paragraph refers to seven stanzas written shortly before the capitulation of Paris, and published under the title of "France," in "Songs of Life and Death," but in the complete edition restored to their original place, as part of the long poem "Salvestra":—

*"Ah, land of roses! France, my love of lands!
How art thou fallen from thy high estate!
Bending, thou writhest in the Vandals' hands,
And the crowned spoiler sitteth in thy gate.
My heart is sore for thee."*

Of "Sleepers and One that Watches," Mr. Swinburne wrote in "The Dark-Blue":—

"Mr. Simeon Solomon's sketch has been translated into verse of kindred strength and delicacy, in three fine sonnets of high rank, among the exquisite and clear-cut 'Intaglios' of Mr. John Payne."

Mr. Watts-Dunton has somewhere written:—

"There is more imagination, more romance, and

more of what *I* call beauty in Mr. Payne's work than in that of any living man, save one"—meaning, of course, Swinburne.

In the field of translation, according to Richard Garnett, Mr. Payne is "literally without a rival." *The Westminster Review* asserts that "As past-master in the difficult and ungrateful art of translation from widely differing languages, he stands practically alone." The paths of poet and translator often lie close together: the poet is always, in one sense or another, and sometimes to an extraordinary degree, a linguist. The author of the following translations, published in twenty-seven volumes by the Villon Society, is a passionate linguist, who has done noble work in the cause—if not in the name—of comparative literature:—

"The Poems of Master François Villon of Paris"; "The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night," nine volumes; "Tales from the Arabic," three volumes; "The Decameron or Boccaccio," three volumes; "Alaeddin and Zein ul Asnam," two stories from the Arabic; "The Novels of Matteo Bandello," six volumes; "The Quatrains of Omar Kheyyam"; "The Poems of Hafiz," three volumes.

The Society has also in preparation:—

"The Book of Kings, from the Persian of Firdausi"; "The Pentameron of Giambattiste Basile, done into English from the Neapolitan original"; "The Life and Death of Cuculain, a romance cycle from the ancient Irish"; and "François Rabelais and other Prose Sketches."

At present the reputation of John Payne rests largely upon his "Arabian Nights" and metrical translation of Villon's "Greater and Lesser Testaments" and minor poems. Even owners and readers of the aforesaid trans-

lations, who know them too well to confound their author with John Howard Payne, the native of New York City, who wrote the song, "Home, Sweet Home," have expressed surprise on being told that the English translator is the author of more than thirty thousand lines of original verse.

In 1881, just as Mr. Payne was putting the last stroke to the first of the nine volumes of "Nights," Mr. Robinson passed a delightful evening with him in his solitary London quarters. He had found a rare spirit. Soon after returning to America he undertook to secure the publication of the poems in the United States, by showing them to the late Charles Dudley Warner, as well as to many others. Mr. Warner responded heartily; he made repeated efforts to interest publishers in the proposition, but, meeting with no encouragement, was compelled reluctantly to abandon it. His urgent request, in 1897, that Mr. Payne would write the Villon article for "A Library of the World's Best Literature," never reached him. To a friend in America he wrote: "Have had several very kind letters from Mr. Warner, who has taken a great deal of trouble to no purpose." With the exception of the group of selections, mainly from "Thorgerda" and the sonnets, given in Stedman's "Victorian Anthology," we are aware of no other attempt, on this side of the water, to place John Payne's original work on the footing it unquestionably merits. The copious collection of "Ballads and Rondeaux" by Gleeson White (Walter Scott, London), includes a greater number of the more sparkling lyrics than are to be found in the "Victorian Anthology"; and in William Sharp's "Sonnets of this Century" we detect the glimmer of three of the "Intaglios." But the English collections, owing to

their prescribed limits, convey no idea of the poet's range as a thinker and scholar. The bent of his mind was scholarly from childhood; and though his youth was passed in uncongenial pursuits amidst unlovely surroundings, he seems ever to have been like a delicate instrument played upon by the kindred harmonies of poetry and music. In the latter a few violin lessons in boyhood were all the instruction ever received; yet they fell on such soil that, had the child been reared among musical people, we are tempted to believe that his passion for production would have found its outlet in sonatas rather than sonnets—in symphonic poems rather than sea-voyages in verse. Self-instruction on the piano (not altogether unlike the solitary methods by which Mr. Payne has preferred to master more than half of the languages at his command) has made it possible—incredible as it may seem—for him to interpret, not by ear, but from the piano score, the most complicated orchestral works of Liszt, Berlioz and Wagner. The precise effect of so persistent an absorption of musical ideas—which must have been carried on for many years to reach a like result—may be difficult to determine; but the existence of the habit or need is sufficient to account for the poet's complete—we had almost said unique—mastery of metrical form. More than the half-century of delving into poetry ancient and modern, it explains what we venture to regard as the “musical content” of his admirably modulated verse, embracing elements more definite than mere sweetness and facility.

In literature his earliest attempt was made at school, when, a boy of nine or ten, he translated into English verse, no longer preserved, a number of the odes of Horace. Before he was twelve he had celebrated

Cæsar's conquest of Britain in lays more or less inspired by Macaulay's. Not only were these outpourings and those of succeeding years allowed to perish, but by far the greater number of the various translations made between the ages of fourteen and twenty-one were condemned to oblivion. Among these were a metrical translation of Dante's entire work in verse; the second part of Goethe's "Faust," also his "Hermann und Dorothea"; Lessing's "Nathan der Weise," and Calderon's "Magico Prodigioso." Innumerable shorter poems were rendered into English from the German, old and modern French, Provençal, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese; but of the total mass only nine lyrics of Goethe and Heine, given in the Villon edition, have been thought worthy of preservation. Wishing to lay stress upon Mr. Payne's inventive faculty, we have included no translations in this volume. On the other hand, we have selected, in further proof of his versatility, as well as of his hold upon foreign tongues, whether acquired in the closet or elsewhere, three original effusions, two in French, the third in Italian, fashioned, like nearly every stanza he has composed in his native tongue, not in cold blood, but at white heat, without labour and with the minimum of correction.

Acting upon a nature thus alive to the things of the intellect, thus sufficient to itself, the opposite tendencies of his family—of his father, in particular—could not fail to add flame to fuel. The nine-year-old boy, drawn to the dictionary by the witchery of word-analysis, is warned that literature will never bake bread; and the omnivorous reader's allowance is withheld lest any part of it should be spent for books. In winter he is forbidden to "segregate himself" for purposes of study; to enforce the decree, fire and light are denied him. At

the age of fourteen the Mozart of letters, with the sensitive ear and intuitive grasp of a born philologist, and with all his ambitions now turned in the direction of language, is taken once for all out of school, to fill various positions—as printer’s devil in a provincial newspaper establishment, as usher in two schools, then as clerk in a solicitor’s office. Everywhere extreme diffidence engenders suffering, until in those phases of the law lying nearest to literature—namely, chancery and conveyancing—his brain and temperament find an occupation in which they no longer appear at a disadvantage. Enabled finally, with the assistance of friends, to found the well-known Villon Society, he succeeded in bringing the work of his strenuous later years before a cosmopolitan and keenly appreciative public. In his own words, in “The Building of the Dream” :—

“ And of a truth, no thing
Was wanting to the squire, but yet one field
Of fight, ere on his shield
The glorious blazon of a knight should shine—
Before the golden sign
Of chivalry should glance at either heel,
And the ennobling steel
Fall softly on his shoulder.”

To take the lines literally, Mr. Payne’s family name, as borne by his father, Mr. Hawkins Payne, was knightly enough, for the Paynes are descended from the bold navigator and admiral of Elizabeth’s England and Kingsley’s “Westward Ho!”—Sir John Hawkins. The old Devonshire family bore the name of Hawkins until marriage with an heiress induced a remote ancestor to add the name of Payne to Hawkins. In revolt against

affectation, the present generation has dropped the name of Hawkins altogether.

Early and late in the heart of the minstrel the passion for translation has come near superseding the poetic faculty. In youth, no less than under the pressure of a task like that of turning the whole of Hafiz into English, it threatened to take full possession of him. It will not be unpleasing to Americans to know that a minute volume of the first twelve essays of Emerson, still treasured among Mr. Payne's dearest books, rekindled in the youth of nineteen the smouldering flame of ideality, inclining him definitely toward creative work. As a poet, Emerson, like Byron, failed to make the faintest impression upon him. Keats and Shelley appealed to him, and his liking for unsubstantial themes has brought him into superficial comparison with them. But while their poems afford scarcely a single domestic touch, John Payne, in at least one ballad, that of "Isobel," and in at least one of the "London City Poems"—"The Plague"—has treated a domestic situation with the utmost tenderness and felicity. The poets to whom he acknowledges an actual debt are, first of all, the singer—

" Whose radiant brow is crowned
With triple coronals ineffable,
Attesting the assay of heaven and hell,"

and

" The glad master standing with one foot
On earth and one foot in the Faery land,"

of the postlude to the narrative poem "Salvestra." After Dante's sway and Spenser's, he owns that of minds so diverse as Drummond of Hawthornden, Henry Vaughan, Landor (in the "Hellenics") Wordsworth, Heine (whom at one time he knew by heart), and Browning (in "Men

and Women," "Paracelsus," and the plays). Repelled by Swinburne's earliest work, he came later to place him next to Shakespeare. Before the publication of "The Masque of Shadows," the influence of Emerson had given way to that of Schopenhauer, and this in its turn led to the study of the Vedantic philosophy of ancient India, which eventually became the poet's chief mental and moral guide. The "BLOOD-DEVOURING WAY" of the sonnet to Omar Kheyyam is the vedantist's thorny path "from talk to fact," of quatrains 549 and 532. The "new and valued friend" of the "Epilogue to the Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night" was Sir Richard F. Burton. The "Dead Master" of the Threnody was Landor. The *amico* of the sonnet, "With a Copy of the Divina Commedia," was the poet, Arthur W. E. O'Shaughnessy.

That the coarseness of an impartial unexpurgated rendering of Oriental masterpieces never found its way into the poet's own songs and stories—that the hand of Villon's translator has escaped being endued with that it works in is clear from "The Civilian's" somewhat old-fashioned—but to the general reader always acceptable—statement that "Songs of Life and Death" might be put into any school-girl's hands, "not only without danger, but with the greatest advantage."

No estimate of Mr. Payne's work, either as scholar or poet, would be complete without reference to the spell that the intellect and atmosphere of France—her language, her scenery, her great writers and foster-children, from Rabelais to Glück, and from Gautier to Auguste de Gobineau, have laid upon him. The newly edited poems bear the inscription:—

"À la Mémoire de mon bien cher et bien amèrement regretté Stéphane Mallarmé, Esprit Exquis et Cœur

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d'Or, je dédie l'édition définitive de ces fleurs de tristesse qu'il aimait quand-même."

In a letter to America we come upon these words:—

"Your long-delayed letter finds me out, at last, on my return from the Ardennes, where I have passed my summer holiday under my favourite conditions, in the midst of exquisite natural and wild beauty, and without seeing an English face or speaking anything but French or German—living, in fact, with the natives and nature."

This spontaneous tribute is offset, in another letter, by one equally glowing to his mother-tongue:—

"My life is given up now to the building up of enormous monuments of English prose, like the "Nights," all that I can now do for that noble English language that I love with an irrepressible affection and reverence, so much so that I might wish my epitaph to be *Linguam Anglicam dilexit* (He loved the English tongue)."

In "London City Poems," the "Requiem for Our Dead in South Africa," the humorous "Dopper's Lament," and the sonnet "England's Hope," love of country and pride of race are overwhelmingly manifest. Other evidence is not lacking that the student of past ages has somehow felt the time-spirit fervently as any man of his period, going beyond the Germans in his instantaneous recognition of Richard Wagner, both as mediævalist and musician. Perhaps the twin voices of poetry and prophecy were never more happily blended than in the prelude to the volume "Songs of Life and Death":—

"Be not disheartened, O our Zoroaster,
O mage of our new music-world of fire—

.
All at thy spring shall drink and know it sweet;
All the false temples shall fall down before thee,
Ay—and the false gods crumble at thy feet."

These dedicatory words were written, as Mr. Payne observes, in 1867-68, "when to mention Wagner as a great musician was well-nigh to incur suspicion of madness." The vivid lay of "Sir Floris" also was dedicated to Wagner, and there is an early sonnet entitled, "Bride-Night: Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*—Act II., scene 2."

Like many another Londoner, engrossed until near life's summit with toil more or less uncongenial, Mr. Payne constantly betrays a pathetic worship of nature in her every mood and manifestation; as in "London City Poems":—

"Yet the flowers of May
 Bloomed in the shaded woodlands of his soul.

 He read; and he was ankle-deep in grass.

 He read; and fragrance of the scented pines
 Rose round his spirit."

So also in "Vere Novo":—

"Out in my little garden
 The crocus is aflame;

 The winter's woes are over:
 My cats upon the wall,
 Gruff, Top, Shireen and Rover,
 Are basking, one and all"

—lines to which is appended a bit of history: "Since the writing of this poem my little angora cat, Rover, has died in her tenth year, to the infinite regret of all who knew her. She was the most loving and engaging of creatures, far more intelligent than the majority of human beings, and was less to be described

as a cat than as half-a-dozen pounds of affection done up in tabby fluff. As Burton says, in the delightful 'We and our Neighbours,'—one of the series of homely masterpieces by the late Mrs. Beecher Stowe,—'One's pets *will* die, and it breaks one's heart.'" That Mr. Payne has—in Schumann's elastic phrase—no *kinder-scenen* is remarkable, in view of his intense love for children and animals, which—according to a saying of Charles Alston Collins, Dickens's son-in-law—borders upon insanity.

In touching upon a few of the poems most salient features, if we mention first their melodious sweetness it is equally because, when all is said, we believe the singing faculty to be a poet's chief requisite, and because, in the verse under consideration, the musical element already noted is, upon the whole, the most constant and characteristic.

Nor would it be easy to ignore the high finish of Payne's work, no less sustained in his earliest than in his latest poems, and somehow conveying a sense of elaboration unspoilt by conscious effort. "The Masque of Shadows" is singularly free from the errors and inequalities common to young writers and first ventures. Mr. Payne seems always to have written with ease, and to have avoided lapses like those of Wordsworth, Swinburne and Rossetti into laboured and cumbrous phraseology. That one or more of his critics should have been misled into making the charge of artificiality is matter for wonder to at least two readers, who know the history of the poems, and are satisfied that however methodical the scholar's mental processes, the poet's own utterances are nothing more nor less than wild-flowers, whose purity and spontaneity are due to the fertile soil whence they sprang. As well say of the

“mariposas” found in the foothills of California, that they owe to excessive cultivation their perfection of tint, their tilted grace, iridescence and butterfly down ! Nor is complexity in the “butterfly tulip” of the Pacific coast irreconcilable with a peculiar simplicity not retained, as a rule, by the pampered guests of garden and hothouse. Extreme simplicity of language, alternating with an exuberance of description suggesting and rivalling Spenser’s, is equally the mark of the poems, narrative or lyrical, and seems to us one of their main elements of strength. The number of words of one syllable is everywhere noticeable. Whole stanzas will be found at random, with sometimes a single word other than monosyllabic, sometimes none ; as in the wonderfully well-knit “Rime of Redemption” :—

“The night is wide : they ride and ride ;
 The lights grow bright and near ;
 There comes a wail upon the gale,
 And eke a descant clear.

There comes a plain of souls in pain,
 And eke a high sweet song,
 As of some fate whose grief is great,
 But yet whose hope is strong.”

According to the *Westminster Review* :—

“Mr. Payne still goes to the store-house of our elder English poets for their old expressive words which we have forgotten, and sets them with fresh beauty to modern thought.”

To quote the *Saturday Review* :—

“‘Sir Floris’ abounds with words of curious and semi-French archaism ; but these are never dragged in ; they suit the general effect, and clearly come from

the overflow of a memory steeped in the romance literature from which they are drawn.”

This very supersaturation, reinforced by the judgment of a linguist who is no pedant, explains his not infrequent use of *rime riche*, common enough in classic French but less common in English, notwithstanding our mother-tongue's scant supply of rhyme-material. Yet it is in the simplest rather than in more or less intricate versification that Mr. Payne employs *rime riche*—evidently for its own sake, and not from labour-saving motives. Thus *sea* rhymes with *see* in the limpid quatrains of “The House of Sorrow,” and *light* is linked with *delight* :—

“The tender ecstasy of sad delight
He has seen pictured there
Upon the canvas of the lingering light,
Under the evening air.”

To the charge of habitual melancholy the poet himself pleads guilty in many places, as in the sonnet “Ignis Fatuus” :—

“My soul is like some pale phantasmal light
That flickers o'er a marsh of mystery,
And with its baleful phosphorescency
Reaches long hands of blue into the night.
It may not give the fair world to men's sight,
Nor rescue back the lovely things that be
Out of the shrouding gloom.”

Here, however, he does his own temperament such scant justice that we are moved to dwell upon the many long passages and entire lyrics in which the minor thread is snapped or overlaid. What, for instance, could be brighter, more vivacious, more spring-like in

quality than "Major Cadence"; the rondel, "Kiss me, Sweetheart"; the rococo, "Straight and swift the swallows fly"; the carol, "Bells of Gold" in "The Fountain of Youth"; the lovely villanelle, "The air is white with snowflakes," "A Birthday Song," or the magnificent "Chant Royal of the God of Love"? The beautiful barcarolle, "A Bacchic of Spring," "Trinitas Trinitatum," the sonnet "Indian Isle," and numerous others are also wholly in the major key; so for the most part is the racy folk-tale of "Sir Winfrith." In many of the very latest pieces, like "Dust to Dust," "Vere Novo," and "Nocturn," is a new note between exaltation and resignation, culminating in the closing words of "Evensong":—

"Work wrought, way wended,
Duty done."

Doubtless, the indefatigable inventor and interpreter will never be able wholly to overcome the life-regret that despite the volume and variety of his original work, it has after all amounted but to flowerage in the dark, unfostered by that degree of the world's sympathy without which art cannot thrive, and giving that world no intimation of the plant's real capacity.

Apparently the main reason for the undercurrent of sadness encountered in the poems is to be found in the pathetic outpouring, "The Grave of my Songs;" but there are other clues to the poet's life of mediæval seclusion and contemplation. Setting aside the question of temperament, loss of health and of a beloved companion (*vide* "A Christmas Vigil"), above all, the after-effects of early repression, have cast a shadow calling irresistibly to mind the bitter complaint of Deumier:—

"L'on meurt en plein bonheur de son malheur passé."

While it would be useless to deny the pessimistic tendencies of verse which, like that of Matthew Arnold, sums up the fermentation and discontent of a restless period, yet in "The Ballad of Shameful Death," and its quasi-counterpart, "Quia Multum Amavit," also in "Night Watches" and in "Areopagitica"—a sermon omitted with reluctance, chiefly on account of its length—there is abundant evidence, not only that the recluse is no misanthrope, but that in certain moods he becomes the spokesman of the people. No reader, it seems to us, could look below the surface of "Shadow-Soul" without realising that a broad humanity is the essential element underlying all the poems, and inevitably, if rarely, breaking into appeal and protest :—

"Haply one day these songs of mine
 Some world-worn mortal may console
 With savour of the bitter wine
 Of tears crushed out from a man's dole ;
 And he may say, tears in his eyne,
There was great love in this man's soul !"

To those who loved Mr. Warner, and remember his passion for long walks—the last a lonely one of eight miles, ending in his sudden death—it may be interesting to know that in his copy of "Songs of Life and Death," another stanza in the same poem was pencil-marked :—

"Sometimes, too, as I walk alone,
 The mists roll up before my eyes,
 And unto me strange lights are shown,
 And many a dream of sapphire skies ;
 The world and all its cares are gone :
 I walk awhile in Paradise."

The main divisions of the new "Poetical Works"

consist of a first volume beginning with "The Romaunt of Sir Floris" and containing only the longer narratives, new and old, like "The Fountain of Youth," an early American subject; "Lautrec," dealing with vampires, a theme fascinating to the antiquary; and "Salvestra," founded upon a brief passage in the "Decameron." The second volume, beginning with "London City Poems" and closing with a few translations, contains a group of "Ballads and Romances" covering all the shorter narratives, and followed by "Sonnets," "Exotica," and "Songs of Life and Death." Among the "Exotica" two amusing *ballades* in the French language are addressed to Villon and to Mr. Payne's critics, the latter having the refrain:—

"J'ai mes fidèles de Paris."

The *ballades* would have preceded and followed the complete translation of Villon's poems, had not one composed and contributed by Théodore de Banville unexpectedly filled their place. Among the "Songs" are many new ones not written before 1902. Indeed, it is difficult for the editorial pen to keep pace with the poet's—driven even at this writing, in 1903, by a pressure not unlike the love-impulse in his own "Aloe Blossom":—

"But as I waited, suddenly there came
 Within me as the flowering of a flame,
 And like the mystic bud that bursts to meet
 Its hundredth spring with thunder and acclaim,
 Love flowered upon me terrible and sweet."

In any case, the complete edition could hardly be regarded definitive after the appearance, in 1902, of the slender sad-coloured pamphlet, "The Descent of the

Dove, and Other Poems ; being a Supplement to the Poetical Works of John Payne ” ; and still later, in 1903, the slender volume “ Vigil and Vision,” thrown off at white heat and containing remarkable verse—several examples of which are to be found in this edition.

Lamenting limits that compel us to exclude “ The Masque of Shadows ” (with a *motif* recalling an intensely modern piece of music,—the gruesome “ Dance Macabre ” of Saint-Saëns, but with a consummation old as the “ Symposium ” of Plato) ; likewise “ Hymn to the Night,” “ Vocation Song,” “ Dust to Dust,” “ Nocturn,” “ In Memoriam, Oliver Madox Brown,” “ A Last Lullaby,” “ Bird-Peep,” and “ A Song of Roses,” we would suggest to the reader such communion with the poems here given as an American enjoyed in a French garden-close :—

“ We went to Aix-les-Bains for six vast weeks, and stayed at the most charming little quiet Hôtel d’Italie, that had a big lovely garden at the back, all arbours and shade-trees and flowers, shut in by high walls, and hushed as any churchyard. Our medical director for the baths was Dr. Casalis, who had a very interesting English wife. One day I asked him if he had any English books. He replied that he had a few, among them a volume of the poetry of John Payne, whom he knew ; and then went on to give me some account of him. As I had never before heard of Mr. Payne, all this added to the curiosity with which I borrowed his ‘ Songs of Life and Death,’ and retired to the garden to read it. There, stretched upon a comfortable divan, in the shade of a grape-vine arbour, where purpling clusters hung temptingly above, I read it

through and through before I laid it down. It was a revelation. I became at once a lover of Mr. Payne, full constant and not as one—

“ ‘That loves and loves not in one short hour’s span.’ ”

It is no doubt in some such spirit that the poems of John Payne must be approached to be appreciated. Like their author, they make slow headway against the hurry and discord of modern existence. In communion less intimate they are hardly of a kind to yield up their true aroma.

LUCY ROBINSON.
(LUCY CATLIN BULL.)

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DEDICATION TO RICHARD WAGNER

OF THE VOLUME "SONGS OF LIFE AND DEATH"

February 1872.

MASTER and chief of all for whom the singers
Strain with full bosoms and ecstatic throats,
For whom the strings beneath the flying fingers,
The sackbuts and the clarions, yield their notes,—

Lord over all for whom the tymbals thunder,
For whom the harps throb like the distant sea,
For whom the shrill sweet flutings cleave in sunder
The surges of the strings that meet and flee,—

O strong sweet soul, whose life is as a mountain
Hymned round about with stress of spirit-choirs,
Whose mighty song leaps sunward like a fountain,
Reaching for lightnings from celestial fires,—

O burning heart and tender, highest, mildest,
Nightingale-throated, with the eagle's wing,—
This sheaf of songs, culled where the ways are wildest
And the shade deepest, to thy feet I bring.

I hail thee as from many hearts that cherish,
Serve and keep white thy thought within their shrines,
Where the flame fades not, though its lustre perish,
Midmost the lurid and the stormy signs.

2 DEDICATION TO RICHARD WAGNER

I greet thee as from those great mates departed
Who first taught Song to know the ways of Soul,
Fit harbingers of thee, the eagle-hearted,
Saw in the art the new sun-planets roll.

I greet thee with a promise and a cheering,—
I, that have loved thee many weary years,
I, that, with eyes strained for the dawn's appearing,
Have clung to thee for hope and healing tears ;

I, that am nought, whose weakling voice has in it
The shrill sole sadness of one wailing note ;
No nightingale I, but a sad-voiced linnet,
Piping thin ditties from a bleeding throat ;

I—since the masters lift no voice to-thee-ward
To stay thy battle in the weary time—
Send forth for thee these weak-winged songs to seaward,
To bear to thee their freight of idle rhyme.

Ah, how weak-voiced and little worth, my master !
Yet haply, as a lark-song on the breeze,
That, winging through the air, black with disaster,
Heartens some exile pacing by the seas,

So even mine, my weak and unskilled singing
May smite thine ear with no unpleasing notes,
What time the shrill sounds of the fight are ringing
About thee and the clamour of dull throats.

And peradventure (for least love is grateful)
The humble song may, for a little while,
Smooth from thy brow the sadness high and fateful,
Call to thy lips the rare and tender smile.

DEDICATION TO RICHARD WAGNER 3

My harmonies are harmonies of sadness,
My light is but as starlight on the wane :
Far nobler bards shall cheer thee with their gladness ;
I bring thee but the song-pulse of my pain.

Be not disheartened, O our Zoroaster,
O mage of our new music-world of fire !
Thou art not all unfriended, O my master !
Let not the great heart fail thee for desire.

What matter though the storm-wind round thee rages,
Though men judge weakly with imperfect sight ?
O master-singer of the heroic ages,
Each dawn is brighter with the appointed light.

Hate's echoes on the inconstant air but languish,
Win not within the world's true heart to be,—
Faint wails for us of far-off souls in anguish,
That chide their own sick selves in all they see.

Thine is the Future—hardly theirs the Present,
The flowerless days that put forth leaf and die—
Theirs that lie steeped in idle days and pleasant,
Letting the pageant of the years pass by.

For the days hasten when shall all adore thee,
All at thy spring shall drink and know it sweet ;
All the false temples shall fall down before thee,
Ay, and the false gods crumble at thy feet.

Then shall men set thee in their holy places,
Hymn thee with anthems of remembering ;
Faiths shall spring up and blossom in thy traces,
Thick as the violets cluster round the Spring.

4 DEDICATION TO RICHARD WAGNER

And then, perchance, when, in the brighter ages,
Men shall awake and know the god they scorned
And mad with grief, grave upon marble pages
(That therewithal the Future may be warned)

The tale of their remorse and shame undying,
They, coming where thy name has kept these sweet,
—These idle songs of mine,—shall set with sighing
My name upon the marble at thy feet ;

For that, when all made mock of and denied thee,
Seeing not the portent and the fiery sword,
I, from my dream, in the mid-heaven descried thee,
Saw and confessed thee, knew and named thee Lord.

SIR ERWIN'S QUESTING

“ Oh, whither, whither ridest thou, Sir Erwin ?
The glitter of the dawn is in the sky ;
 And I hear the laverock singing,
 Where the silken corn is springing
And the green-and-gold of summer's on the rye.”

“ O lady fair, I ride toward the setting ;
For the glamour of the West is on my heart,
 And I hear a dream-voice calling
 To the land where dews are falling
And the blossoms of the springtide ne'er depart.”

“ Oh, what, oh, what thing seekest thou, Sir Erwin ?
Is life no longer pleasant to thy soul ?
 Am I no more heart's dearest,
 Though the summer skies are clearest
And the gold of June is fresh on copse and knoll ? ”

“ O sweet, I seek the land where love is holy
And the bloom of youth is ever on the flowers ;
 The land where joy is painless
 And the eyes' delight is stainless
And the break of hope faints never in the weary
 noontide hours.”

“Oh, rest awhile, oh, rest awhile, Sir Erwin !
The hills are yet ungilded by the sun.
 Oh, tarry till the morning
 Have chased the mists of dawning
And the weariness of noon be past and done !”

“O lady fair, I may not tarry longer !
The sun is climbing fast above the grey
 And I hear the trumpets blowing,
 Where the eastern clouds are glowing
And the mists of night are breaking from the city
 of the day.”

Far out into the greenwood rides Sir Erwin,
Oh, far into the wild wood rideth he !
 And there meet him sisters seven,
 When the sun is high in heaven
And the gold of noon is bright on flower and tree.

Oh, wonder-lovely maidens were the seven,
With mantles of the crimson and the green,
 With red-gold rings and girdles
 And sea-blue shoes and kirtles,
And eyes that shone like cornflowers in their locks'
 corn-golden sheen.

“Oh, light thee down and dwell with us, heart's
 dearest !
And we will sing thee wonder-lovely songs,
 And we will strew with roses
 The place where thy repose is
And teach thee all the rapture that unto love belongs.”

“Oh, light thee down and dwell with us, heart's
dearest !

We have full many a secret of delight :

Thy day shall be one sweetness

Of love in its completeness

And the nightingale shall sing to thee the whole
enchanted night.”

“Oh, woe is me ! I may not stay, fair maidens ;

My quest is for a country far and wild ;

The land where springs the Iris,¹

Where the end of all desire is

And the thought of love lives ever undefiled.”

“Oh, light thee down and dwell with us, heart's
dearest !

Thou wilt wear thy youth to eld in such a quest :

For it lies beyond the setting,

In the land of the Forgetting,

In the bosom of the everlasting rest !”

Far on into the greenwood rides Sir Erwin,

Oh, far into the wild wood rideth he !

And he sees a fair wife sitting,

At the hour when light is flitting

And the gold of sunset gathers on the sea.

Oh, very fair and stately was her seeming

And very sweet and dreamful were her eyes !

And as she sat a-weaving

She sang a song of grieving,

Full low and sweet to anguish, mixt with sighs.

¹ There is a legend that the more distant-seeming end of the rainbow begins in Fairyland.

“Oh, tell me what thou weavest there, fair lady,
I prithee tell me quickly what thou art !”

“I am more fair than seeming,
And I weave the webs of dreaming
For the solace of the world-awearied heart.”

“Oh, prithee tell me, tell to me, fair lady,
What song is that thou singest and so sweet ?”

“I sing the songs of sorrow
That is golden on the morrow,
And I charm with them the sad hours' leaden feet.

“Oh, light thee down and dwell with me, heart's
dearest !

Thou hast wandered till thy face is furrowed deep ;
But I will charm earth's cumpers
From the rose-leaves of thy slumbers
And will fold thee in the lotus-leaves of sleep.”

“Oh, woe is me ! oh, woe is me, fair lady !
A hand of magic draws me on my quest
Toward the land of story,
Where glows the sunset-glory
And the light of love fades never from the West.”

“Oh, light thee down and dwell with me, heart's
dearest !

Thine eyes will lose their lustre by the way ;
For it lies far out to yonder,
Where the setting sun dips under
And the funeral pyres are burning for the day.”

Oh, far thorough the greenwood rides Sir Erwin,
Oh, far out of the wild wood rideth he !
 And he comes where waves are plashing
 And the wild white crests are dashing
On the pebbles of a grey and stormy sea.

Far down toward the tide-flow rides Sir Erwin,
Oh, far adown the shingle rideth he !
 And he sees a shallop rocking
 Upon the wild waves' flocking,
And an ancient steersman sitting in the lee.

Oh, very weird and gruesome was that steersman,
With hair that mocked for white the driven snow !
 The light of some strange madness
 Was in his eyes' grey sadness
And he showed like some pale ghost of long ago.

“Oh, sail with me ! oh, sail with me, Sir Erwin !
Thou hast wandered in thy questing far enough.
 I will bring thee where Love's ease is
 For ever, though the breezes
Blow rudely and the broad green way be rough.”

“Reach hand to me, reach hand to me, old steersman !
I will sail with thee for questing o'er the main.
 Although thine eyes look coldly,
 I will dare the venture boldly ;
For I weary for an ending of my pain.”

Oh, long they rode on billows, in the glory
Of the gold and crimson standards of the West !
 So came they, in the setting,
 To the land of the Forgetting,
Where the weary and the woeful arc at rest.

“Oh, what can be this land that is so peaceful,
That lies beyond the setting of the sun ?
I hear a dream-bell ringing
And I hear a strange sweet singing
And the tender gold of twilight's on the dun.

“Oh, what are these fair forms that float toward me
And what are these that hold me by the hand,
As if they long had sought me ?
And what art thou hast brought me
O'er the ocean to this dream-enchanted strand ?”

“Fair knight, this is the land of the Hereafter,
And the name that men do know me by is Death :
For the love from life that's flying,
Lives ever for the dying
And the stains of it are purged with 'scape of breath.”

From “Ballads and Romances.”

THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH

A ROMANCE OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Suggested by a passage in
Antonio de Herrera's *Historia
General de las Indias Occiden-
tales*.

WE sailed from Cadiz, Perez, Blas and I,
Bound westward for the golden Indian seas,
One Christmas morning in the thirtieth year
Since Colon furrowed first the Western main.
Three old sea-dogs we were, well tried and tanned
In battle and hard weather ; they had sailed
With the great Admiral in his first emprise
And I with stout de Leon, when he flung
The banner of the kingdoms to the breeze
Upon the sunny shores of Florida.
We had in our adventurings amassed
Some store of gold, enough for our require,
By stress of toilful days and careful nights
And dint of dogged labour and hard knocks ;
And now the whitening harvest of our heads
Might well have monished us to slacken sail
And turn our thoughts toward the port of death,
Leaving the furtherance of our emprise
Unto the fresher hands of younger men.
But he, who long has used to ride the deep
And scent the briny breezes of the main,

Inhales a second nature with the breath
Of that unresting element and it,
With all its spells of reckless venturousness,
Grows subtly blended with his inmost soul
And will not let him rest upon the land.
And so we three, grey-bearded, ancient men,
Furrowed with years, but yet with hearts as stout
And sinews as well strung as many a youth
In whom the hot blood rages, launched again
Into the olden course and bent our sails
Once more toward the setting. Not that we
Were bitten by that fierce and senseless craze
And hunger for red gold, that drove the folk
By myriads to the fruitful Western shores
And made the happy valleys ring with war,
Plains waste with fire and red with seas of blood :
A nobler, if a more unreal aim
Allured our hopes toward the Occident,
And thawed the frost of age within our veins.

I had with Leon companied, when he
Sought vainly for the Isle of Bimini,
And heard the Indians of the Cuban coast
Tell how, some fifty years ago, a tribe
Had sallied thence to seek that golden strand,
Where springs the Fountain of Eternal Youth,
And, finding it, had lost the memory
Of all their native ties and lingered there,
Lapt in an endless dream of Paradise.

Oft had the wondrous legend filled my sense
To intermittent longing, though, what time
The fire of youth was fresh within my veins,
I gave scant heed to it ; but when my head
Grew white with winter's snows, the ancient fire
Flamed up again within me and my soul

Yearned unappeasably toward the West,
Where welled the wondrous chrism. At my heat
These two my comrades kindled to like warmth
And with like aim we fitted out a ship
And turned her head toward the setting sun,
Holding it well to let none know our thought,
But giving out we sought the general goal
And went to work the mines of Paria.
The Christmas bells rang cheerily, as we loosed
Our carvel from its moorings, and the sky
Shone blue with blithest omen. So we stood
Adown the harbour, and with favouring winds
Came speedily to Ferro, where we took
New store of meat and drink, and, sailing on,
Had not long lost from sight the topmost peak
When some enchantment seemed to fall upon
And paralyse the water and the air ;
And glad winds dropped, the sea fell down to glass
And the gold sun flamed stirless in the sky.
For some score days we felt no breath of air
And heard no break of ripples, but we lay
And sweltered in the grip of that fierce heat.
And so we drifted, in the weary calm,
A slow foot forward and a slow foot back,
Upon the long low folded slopes of sea,
Until, when all left hope and looked for death,
A swift sweet breeze sprang up and drove us on,
Across foam-spangled ripples, through a waste
Of wet weed-tangle ; and anon the air
Grew faint with balmy flower-breaths ; a white bird
Lit like a dream upon our sea-browned sail
And brought with it the promise of the land.
Softer and balmier grew the breeze, and thick
And thicker came the signs of nearing shores ;

And so, one morning, from the early mists
A green-coned island rose up in our way
And our glad hearts were conscious of the land.
Landing, we met with Spaniards armed and clothed,
Who brought us to the chief town of the isle,
That lay snow-white within a blaze of green.
It was New Spain, and having there refreshed
Our weary bodies with a grateful rest
Among the pleasant places of the isle,
We trimmed our sails anew toward the West
And steered into the distance with stout hearts.

Through many a winding maze of wooded aits
And channels where the lush boughs canopied
The lucent waters in their sanded bed,
We passed and smelt sweet savours of strange flowers,
That filled the forests with a blaze of bloom.
This coasting Cuba, and the last land passed,
Where the white headland rushed into the deep
And strove in vain to reach some kindred land,
Lost in the infinite distance, fields of green
Glittered and broke to surges, far and wide,
Until the eye lost vision. Nothing feared,
We bade farewell to all the terraced slopes
And fragrant woodlands and with fluttering sails,
Stretched out into the undiscovered seas.
Fair winds soon drove us out of sight of land
And in a sweet, bright glory of June warmth,
Attempered by lithe breezes, did we cleave,
For many days, the slow and pearled surge,
Fair heaven o'er us of a wildflower's blue,
With now and then a trail of golden cloud,
Feathered with silver, sloping o'er its bell
Of windless azure, and a jasper sea,
Full of all glints and plays of jewelled light,

Fishes of diamond and seaweed trails,
Ruby and emerald, that bore wide blooms
Of white and purple. Some enchanted land
Lay for our sight beneath that crystal dome
Of hyaline inverted toward the sky,
Drinking the soft light with so whole a bliss
That some new radiance ever woke in it.

So journeyed we for many a golden day
And many a night enchanted, till, at last,
One night, the sunset lay across the West,
In one great sheet of bright and awful gold,
And would not fade for twilight. Through the air
The hours fled past toward midnight ; but the sun
Was stayed by some new Joshua and the West
Still seemed the land of the Apocalypse,
Emblazoning the future of our hopes.
We all did marvel at the miracle,
And some began to quake for very fear ;
But Perez lifted up his voice and said,
“ Friends, this is e’en the very sign of God,
To show us, of His mercy, we shall see
And come to what we long for, ere we die.”
And as he spoke, a fresher breeze fell down
Upon the gold-stained canvas of the sails,
So that we, driving fast toward the West
And its miraculous splendours, saw gold towers
And spires of burning emerald glance and grow
Against the golden background. Then great awe
And wondrous comfort fell upon us all
And from our lips, “ The City of the Lord ! ”
Came with a reverent triumph, for it seemed
Indeed the town of pearl and golden gates
And angels walking in the beryl streets ;
And as we ever ran toward the place

The joy of Mary did possess our hearts,
And, kneeling down together on the deck,
We all linked hands and offered thanks to God.

The hours went by and lengthened out to days,
And yet no darkness curtained that fair fire,
No sign of dawning glimmered in the East ;
But still that glory flamed across the West
And still into the setting fled our bark.
So, as we counted it by lapse of time,
Bereft of natural signs of dark and light,
Seven days had passed, and on the seventh day,
At fall of eventide, or what is wont
To be that time in this our world that knows
No miracles, the splendours gathered up
And running all together like a scroll,
Were bound into a single blazing globe,
That gradually did shrink upon itself,
Until it was but as a greater star
And hung in heaven, a splendid lucent pearl,
Flooding the purple twilight with soft fire.
And as the flaming curtain passed away
And left the Westward empty, from the span
Of ocean full before us rose a slope
Of pleasant shores and smiling terraces,
Crowned with a tender glory of fair green.

Our hearts leapt up within us ; something spoke
To us of the fulfilment of our hopes ;
And as we drew yet nearer, snow-white sands,
Gemmed with bright shells and coloured wonderments
Of stones and seaweed, sparkled on the rim
Of the glad blue, and what seemed palaces
Of dreamlike beauty shimmered afar off,
Like agates, through the mazes of the woods.
We ran the carvel through a wooded reach

Of shelving water, clear and musical
With fret of breaking ripples on the stones,
And drove the keel into the yielding sand,
Where, with a gracious curve, the silver shore
Sloped down and held the ocean in its arms.
Landing, we entered, through a portico
Of columned palms, a forest fair and wide,
Wherein long glades ran stretching in the calm
And rayed out through the leafage on all hands ;
And as our feet trod grass, the tropic night
Was wasted and the cool sweet early day
Was born in the blue heavens. On all sides,
The fruitful earth was mad with joy of Spring,
Not, as in our cold West, the painful lands
Flower with a thin spare stint of meagre blooms,
But with a blaze of heaven's own splendrousness
Moulded to blossom ; in the lavish land
There was not room enough for the blithe blooms
To spread to fulness their luxuriance ;
And, so they ran and revelled up the trunks
And, seizing all the interspace of air,
Shut out the sky with frolic flowerage.
And as we went, the cloisters of the woods
Rang with the golden choirings of the birds,
God's poets, that did give Him praise for Spring,
And all the tender twilight of the woods
Was brimmed with ripples of their minstrelsy.

Some hours we journeyed slowly through the aisles
Of emerald, hung with flower-trails wild and sweet,
Whose scent usurped the waftings of the breeze
And lapt our senses in a golden dream,—
Slowly, I say ; for wonder held our feet,
And we were often fain to halt and feed
Our dazed eyes on the exquisite fair peace

Of all things' perfect beauty and delight.
At last we came to where the cloistered glades
Grew wider and we heard a noise of bells
And glad wide horn-notes floating through the trees
And waning lingeringly along the aisles ;
And a far voice of some most lovely sound
Held all the air with one enchanted note,
As 'twere the cadence of the angels' song,
When in the dawn the gates of heaven unfold,
Had floated down and lit upon the earth.
And then the forest ceased and in the noon,
Now that the sun rode high in the blue steeps,
We saw a fair white city in the plain,
Rounded with blossomed flowers and singing rills
And fringed with tender grace of nestling trees.
The gates stood open for our welcoming
And in we passed, but saw none in the ways
And wandered slowly onward through the streets,
Misdoubting us the whole might be a dream
And loath to speak, lest something break the charm.

Full lovely and most pleasant was the place,
Builded with palaces of purest white
And columns graven in all gracious shapes
Of lovely things, that harbour in the world
Or in the poet's fancy. All the walls
Were laced with golden tracery and set
With precious marbles, cunningly y-wrought
To delicate frail fretwork. Argent spires
Rose, pistil-like, toward the heavens serene,
From out moon-petalled flower-domes and the roofs
Seemed, in the noontide, one great graven prayer,
For the aspiring of their minarets.
Fair courtyards caught the quiet from the air
And hoarded up the shadow in their hearts,

Making the stillness musical with pearls
And silver of their fountains' gurgling plash.
A city of the pleasaunce of the gods
It seemed, embowered in a flower-soft calm,
Soiled by no breath of clamour or desire.

So did we wander up that silver street,
As one who, in the lapses of a dream,
Goes like a god, for lack of wonderment,
And came to where a sudden water welled
Among moss-feathered pebbles and was turned
Into the middle way, wherein it ran
Along the agate stones, rejoicingly,
And marged itself with bands of vivid bloom.
It was so clear and sang so sweet a song
Of cool fresh quiet that we all were fain
To halt and lave our hands and feet in it,
So haply virtue might be had from it
Of its untroubled blitheness. This being done,
We wandered on again by that fair flood,
That seemed to us a rippled silver clue,
Unwinded by some river-deity,
Friendly to man, and leading, step by step,
To some far seat of exquisite idlesse.
So came we where the long slow quiet way
Was done and lost itself in one wide space,
Where columns stood in fair and measured ranks,
Arched with a running frieze of graven work.
Stately and tall they were, cornelian-plinthed,
With stems of jasper and chalcedony,
And ran in goodly order round the place,
Circling a wide bright curtilage of clear
And polished marble, veined with branching gold
And jacinth woven in its cloudless grain.
In the mid-square a cistern, lipped with pearl

And hollowed from the marble of the floor,
Was clear with crystal water, through whose lymph
One saw the bottom paved with cunning shapes
Of ancient legends, beasts and birds and flowers,
Fashioned in yellow gold on milk-white stone.

Into the cistern emptied all its rills
The laughing stream that ran beside our feet,
And filling all the cool still flood with gleams
And rippled swirls and eddies of its own
Mercurial silver, passed out o'er a slope
Of jasper from the cistern's farther side
And gurgled through a channel in the floor,
Wherefrom it drew that sweet and murmurous noise
Of soft accords suspended, that had swelled
Upon us in the opening of the wood,
Until its silver blended with the green
Of a cool woodland shadow and its chirp
Of laughing ripples in the cloistered calm
Of arching trunks was silent. Following
The blithe stream's way, we stood upon the brink
Of that cool crystal and gazed down through it
Upon the inlaid figures in the bed,
That flashed and wavered so with that unrest
Of ceaseless currents, that they seemed to us
To have again a strange half-life in them
And nod and sign to us. We dipped our hands
For idlesse in the lappings of the stream,
That curled and glistered on the marble's brim,
And wondered idly what these things might be
That were so fairly pictured on the stone,
And if the place were void of living soul
To use its dainty brightness. So we might
Have stood and gazed and dreamed away the day,
So fair a spell of quiet held the air ;

But, as we listened, suddenly a sound
Of various music smote upon our ears,
And we were ware of some enchanted throb
Of very lovely singing, that for aye
Drew nearer, as it were the singers came
Toward us, in the near vicinity.
And as it grew, the air was all a-flower
With intermingling antiphons of sound ;
The passionate pulse of harp-strings, smitten soft
To wait upon the cadenced swell and wane
Of the alternate voices, throbbed and stirred
In the cool peace of that sweet reverend place :
High steeples rained bell-silver on the roofs
And the clear gold of clarions floated up
And echoed through the columned solitudes.

Before us rose a high and stately wall,
Painted with cunning past the skill of men,—
It seemed to us,—with shapes of olden time,
Presenting, in deep colours, like the flush
Of flowers that diapers the fields in June,
All things that have been celebrate of old,
Shapes of high kings, of heathen men and dames,
Ladies and knights in dalliance of love
Or ranged in rank of feast or tournament.
(I do remember once I saw the like,
But in a meaner fashion and less fair,
At Naples, when our army held the realm
Against the French.) Surpassing fair they were,
Gods in the aspect and most worshipful,
Clad in bright raiment, gold and purpurine.
So goodly was their seeming and withal
So wonder-lively fashioned, that we looked
To see them leave their places on the wall
And walk among us and have speech of us.

Between two columns in the midst, a space
Was set apart, whereon no living thing
Was limned, but the stone was subtly wrought
With graven silver, arabesqued and chased
In interwoven patterns, very bright
And strange, wherein we wondered much to see
That ever sphere did twine with sphere, nor was
There any angled figure in the woof,
Except one great gold cross, that broke the play
Of circles in the centre of the space.

In this a wide door opened, that had been
So closely fitted to the joining wall
That our eyes had no cognizance of it,
And folding back itself on either side,
Gave passage to our sight into an aisle
Of cloistered fretwork, at whose farthest end
Shone glint of mystic gold and blazonry.

It was not clear for distance, at the first,
What was it moved and glittered in the haze ;
But, as we gazed, a train of stately men,
Vestured in flowing garments, swept along
The heart of that cool stillness and did come
Majestically toward us with slow steps.
And as they grew into our clearer sight,
We saw they were full goodly to behold,
Gracious in carriage and with port assured
In simple nobleness. It seemed to us
That we had known such figures in some dream
Of bygone days, so strangely bright they were
Of aspect and serene in kindly peace,
Resembling nothing earthly we had seen.
Their vesture was no less unknown to us,
Being of some fair white fabric, soft as silk
And looped with broad rich gold and broidery

Of banded silver, and their flowing hair
Was knitted with the plumes of strange bright birds,
That flashed and sparkled gem-like in the sun,
Emerald and gold and turquoise. At their head
Came one whose visage wore a special air
Of reverence and simplicity, uncrossed
By any furrow of ignoble care.

A down his breast a fair white beard did flow
And foam-white was the flowerage of his head ;
But else of sad wan eld was little trace
Upon his mien, except for veneration.
It seemed as if his youth had held so dear
The sojourn of life's spring-time, it had chosen
Rather to consort with the drifts of age
Than spread sad wings toward a fresher haven.
Upon his front a band of woven gold,
Graven with symbols, added evidence
Unneeded to his brow's regality,
And in his hand a silver wand he bore,
Whereon a golden falcon spread its wings
And poised itself as if for imminent flight.

We all bowed heads, as conscious of some might
Of soul and station far above our own ;
And that mild ancient, casting on us all
His eyes' benignness, gave us welcoming,
In speech so clear and universal-toned,
We could not choose but apprehend his words
And the fair meaning of them, when he said,
"Be welcome to the City of the Day,
O seekers for the Isle of Bimini !"
And knew that here at last our quest was won.

Then did he speak to those that followed him,
And the fair youths, that were his chamberlains,
Laid gentle hands on us and led us all

Into the inner palace, where we soothed
Our weary limbs with soft and fragrant baths
And girt us in new garments of fair white,
Made rich with bands of silken broidery.
This done, our weariness and our fatigues
Fell from us with our travel-stainèd weeds
And we were as new men in heart and limb.

Then joyously we followed those our guides,
Through many an aisle of fair and lucent stone,
Into a wide and lofted banquet-hall,
Where the pierced walls showed through the azure sky
And shaped the light that won across the chinks
Into a dainty fretted lace of gold.
High up into the shadow curved the roof
And treasured up, in many a tender gloom
Of amethyst and purple, echoings
Of woodland songs and cool of forest shades
And soft sweet breezes straying in the flowers.
For bearing of its bell of latticed blue
Were columns of majestic linden-trees,
Whose blossom scented all the luminous air ;
And in the boughs gold-feathered birds did make
Rare music for the pleasure of the folk
That lay below in many a goodly rank,
Reclined among sweet scents and lavish flowers.
There could no shaft of sun be wearisome
Nor airless ardour of the heavy noon,
For green of shading boughs and silver plash
Of ceaseless fountains in the hollow coigns.

Here was a goodly banquet furnished forth ;
And as we entered, he that ruled the feast
Did set us near himself and talked with us
And showed and told us many goodly things
And marvels that had usance in the place.

Then did we ask him of that fabled stream
That had such puissance for defeat of age ;
Whereat his visage grew, meseemed, a thought
O'ershadowed ; but anon he smiled on us
And made fair answer that, ourselves refreshed
With needful rest and slumber, he himself
Would on the morrow further our desire
Toward the fount miraculous ; and turned
The talk to other things and bade us leave
Our past fatigues and eat and drink new life.

Great joyance had we in the pleasant things
That were presented to our every sense,
And great refreshing for our weary souls,
Jaded with age and unrelenting toil.
Nor, in the progress of the glad repast,
Did cheer sink down to grossness ; for we ate
Of fruits and meats (and drank of wines the while,
Costly and rich) that were so delicate
And noble in their essence, and did hear
And see and scent such high and lovely things,
That all that was most godlike in ourselves
Did cast off imperfection for the nonce
And was made pure by that most sweet converse.

The banquet ended, minstrels took their harps
And sang the praises of the blossom-time
And high delights of bright and puissant love :
How May is sweet with amorous effects
And all things in its season know but one
And flower and sing and are most fair for one
And one alone most tender, holiest Love :
How life in love has ever deathless spring,
And all the early glory of the year
Is but the travail of the earth with love,
That is told forth in bloom of painted flowers

And silver speech of many-choiring birds.

And these strains ended with applause of all
 And to the great enhancement of our peace,
 Another smote the soft complaining strings
 To notes of graver sweetness, and did sing
 A quaint sad song of Autumn and of Death,
 Made very sweet with joining cadences
 Of silver harp-notes. Thus, methinks, it ran :—

*LET others praise the May for bright and clear
 And Love, that in the flower-time thrives amain :*

*For me, my songs shall hymn the dying year
 And death, that is the salve of mortal pain.*

For what is autumn but the grateful wane

Of weary summer to the sleep of snows ?

*And what is winter but the earth's repose,
 And death the cold sweet close of some new spring,
 That folds to slumber every tired thing ?*

*Let others walk to hear the roundelay
 Of song-birds quiring to the risen year :*

*For me, I love the quiet throstle's lay,
 When in the woods the shredded leaves are sere
 And the faint heavens are watchet in the mere.*

*The autumn's pale calm grey of sober peace
 Is lovelier to me than the swift increase
 Of colour in the spring-tide's restless air ;
 For my heart flowers when the boughs are bare.*

*If love be May, then love is nought to me ;
 For in my thought his sweets are sweeter far
 When in the deepening twilight shadows flee,
 When all delights but half unfolded are
 And waste fulfilment comes not to unbar*

*The gates of weariness. Faint flowers are sweet
And murmured music daintily doth greet
My senses more than bolder scent or song:
I will my joys not fierce to be, but long.*

*Sweet death, if men do fear thy tender touch,
It is because they know thee not for fair,
Since that their eyes are dazzled over-much
By fierce delights of life and blinding glare
Of unenduring bliss, that throws despair
Behind it as its shadow, when the sun
Slopes through the evening and the hills are dun.
They would not call thee dark and wan and cold,
Had their faint eyes but shunned the noon's full gold.*

*For lo! thou art not black to loving eyes,
But tender grey, not unillumed by rose
Or that pale feathery gold that on the skies
Of autumn such a sad sweet glory throws.
Though in thy shades no glare of sunlight glows,
Yet through thy dusk a tender moon of hope
Is clear, nor lacks there in the misted slope
Of thy long vistas many a helpful light,
O Death, for very piteous is thy might!*

*Let those that love them sing of Love and May;
I give to Love full sweet another name
And with soft sighs and singings to Him pray,
And not with trumpets' silver-strong acclaim
Blazon to men his wonder-working fame:
For my Love's name is Death, and I am fain
To love the long sad years and life's kind wane;
For what is autumn but a later spring
And what is Death but life's revesturing?*

Thus blithely sped the golden-footed hours
Athwart the sloping sunlight of the space
'Twixt noon and dusk, in various delight
Of song and converse, till the purple webs
Of night began to flutter o'er the gold
Of sunset, and the air of that bright place
Was strewn with pearls of moonlight. Then men brought
Great golden-fleec'd webs of silk-soft wool
And furs of white and sable-coated beasts
And laid them on the floor and thereon strewed
Fair green of moss and rainbow plumages
Of exquisite strange birds, whereon the folk,
Won with light labour to fatigue as light
And easeful, soon addressed themselves to rest.

But those fair youths, to whom we were in charge,
Unbidden, brought us to a place apart,
Wherein fair chambers, golden-ceiled and hung
With grey and purple arras, lay beside
An aisle of columned marble, stretching down,
With casements clear and quaintly-carven roofs,
Through many a tender vista of soft shade
And trellised leafage : there did we bestow
Our weary limbs and heard the nightingale,
All night among the windless myrtle-groves
Without, entreating all the tremulous air
To passion with the splendour of her song,
Woven with flower-scents inextricably.
The night was fair for us with happy dreams,
And in the morning, ere the sun had drawn
The early mists from off the blushing day,
There came to us the king of that fair land
And did entreat us rise and harness us ;
For that the place we sought was from the town

Distant a long day's journey, and the time
Was gracious, in the freshness of the dawn,
To break the earlier hardness of the way.
Then did we all take horse, and riding forth
By the fair guiding silver of the brook,
That ran toward the northward of the town,
We passed through many a leafy forest glade
And saw the fresh flowers wet with the night dew
And listened to the newly-wakened birds,
That sang their clearest for the fair young day.
Right goodly was the aspect of the earth,
Clad with glad blooms and flushed with joy of
spring,

As on we wended in the early morn,
Before the grossness of the noon fell down :
And as we went, a goodly company,
The minstrels lifted up their voice and sang,
As birds that could not choose but music make,
For very joyance of the pleasant time.
And one right well I marked, who made the birds
From every sunny knoll and budded copse
Give back blithe antiphons of melody
To every phrase and cadence of his song.
Comely and young he was, and passing skilled
In making lays and rondels for the lute :—
And this, among a crowd of sweeter songs,
If memory serve me rightly, did he sing.

*BELLS of gold where the sun has been,
Azure cups in the woven green,
Who in the night has been with you
And painted you golden and jewel-blue
And brimmed your flower-cups with diamond dew ?*

*Lo! in the evening Spring was dead
 And the flowers had lost their maidenhead
 Under the burning kiss of the sun :
 Tell me, who was the shining one
 That came by night when the sky was dun*

*And the pale thin mists were over the moon,
 And brimmed your hearts with the wine of noon ?
 Who was it breathed on the painted May,
 Under the screen of the shadow play,
 And gave it life for another day ?*

*I watched at the setting to see him ride,
 But only saw the day that died,
 The faint-eyed flowerets shrink and fail
 Into their shrouding petals' veil
 And all things under the moon turn pale.*

*I watched in the night, but saw no thing.
 I heard in the midnight the grey bird sing
 And ran to look for the shape of power,
 But saw no thing in the silence flower,
 Save moon-mists over forest and bower.*

*Goldcups, it could not have been the May,
 For dead in the twilight the springtime lay,
 Under the arch of the setting sun,
 Ere in the gloaming the day was done
 And the masque of the shadows had begun.*

*But lo! in the early scented morn
 A new delight in the air was born ;
 Brighter than ever bloomed the spring,
 The glad flowers blew and the birds did sing
 And blithe was every living thing.*

*Merles, that flute in the linden-hall,
Larks, if ye would, ye could tell me all ;
Ye that were waking at break of day,
Did ye see no one pass away,
With ripple of song and pinion-play ?*

*Ah ! I am sure that ye know him well,
Although ye are false and will not tell !
Haply, nathless, I shall be near
And hear you praise him loudly and clear,
Some day when ye wit not I can hear.*

So wended we with mirth and minstrelsy
Throughout the morning hours, and presently
Emerging from the pleasant wood, we rode
By many a long stretch of level plains,
Waved fields of rainbow grasses and wide moors
Bejewelled thick with white and azure bells,
And saw rich flower-cups, all ablaze with gold
And purple, lie and swelter in the sun,
And others, blue as is the sky at noon
Unclouded, trail and crawl along the grass
And star the green with sudden sapphire blooms.
And then we came to where the frolic brook
Swelled into manhood and its silver thread
Was woven out into a river's stretch
Of broad unruffled crystal. Here a boat,
Wide bowed and long, lay rocking on the stream,
Among great lazy lilies, white and red
And regal purple, lolling in the sun.

Dismounting here, we floated up the tide,
Propelled by one that stood upon the prow
And spurned the sanded bottom with his pole,
Along wide sunny lapses of the stream,

Now breasting rushes, purple as the tips
Of fair Aurora's fingers, when she parts
The veils of daybreak, now embowered in green
And blue of floating iris. Though long rifts
Of wooded cliffs we passed, where here and there
The naked rock showed white as a swan's breast,
Riven through and through by veins of virgin gold,
Or haply cleft with gaping crevices,
Wherethrough the jewelled riches of its heart
Did force themselves from out their treasury
And staunched the cloven wound with precious
salve

Of living diamond. Here the water showed,
Through its clear lymph, great crystals in the bed
And nuggets of bright metal, water-worn
To strange fantastic shapes ; and now and then,
As we did paddle idly with our hands,
Letting the clear stream ripple through the chinks
Of our obstructing fingers, with a sound
Of soft melodious plaining for the check,
A great gold-armoured fish, with scales of pearl
And martlets of wine-red upon his back,
Rose slowly to the surface, waving all
The pennons of his fins, and gazed at us
With fearless eyes. And there the wrinkled bed
Shelved suddenly into a deep clear pool,
Whose brink was fringed with waving water-bells ;
And at the bottom lay gold-coloured shells
And silver pearls embedded in brown sand,
And many a fish and harmless water-snake
Floated and crawled along the river-weeds.

But nothing harmful seemed to us to dwell
Within that fair clear water ;—pike nor coil
Of deadly worm, nor on the verging banks

In field or copse, as far as eye could see,
Was any lynx or wolf or brindled beast,
To stir the lovely stillness of the land
With whisper of disquiet. As we went,
Much wondering at the goodly peace that reigned
In all and at the marvellous fair things
That glided by us, Perez took a lute
(Full featly could he turn a stately song),
And praised the place and its serene delights.

*“O HAPPY pleasaunce of the gods!” he sang,
“Where all is fair and there is harm in nought,
Where never lightnings break nor thunder-clang,
Nor ever summer air with storm is fraught,
Nor by the hurtling hail is ruin wrought,
But kindly nature is at peace with man
And all things sweetly fill their given span!*

*“O pleasant land, where winter never blinds
The bare waste ways with snow-drift, nor the frost
With wrinkled ice the sad wan waters binds,
Nor spring-tide joy by winter thoughts is crost,
Where never hope for weariness is lost,
But life is warm, though woods be cold and grey,
And never in the flower-hearts dies the May!*

*“Where never skies are dull, nor tempest scowls,
Nor monster riots in the river’s glass,
Where never in the woods the fierce beast prowls,
But in the fields the harmless snake does pass,
A living jewel, through the flowered grass,
Where sun burns not, nor breaths of winter freeze,
Nor thunder-blasts shrill drearly through the trees!*

*“ Yet is there nothing here that in the air
Should breathe such potency of healing balm
As might compel the unkindly blast to spare
Or birds to sing a never-ending psalm,
Or meadows glitter with the summer calm,
Or purge the terror from the winter grim :
But men love God and put their trust in Him !*

*“ And so all things of His do they hold dear
And see in all His handiwork a friend,
And not a foe,—and therefore skies are clear
And flowers are sweet, because men’s souls intend
The essence of well-being, and so bend
The kindred life of wood and field and fell
To that fair peace that in themselves does dwell !*

*“ For man it is that makes his circumstance,
Honouring all and loving all things good,
Bethinking him how he may best advance
The harvesting of nature’s kindly mood,
By helping her in that relief she would
Be ever working for his cheer and stay :
So doth he love and joy in her alway.*

*“ O happy folk that dwell in such a land !
O happy land that hast such habitants,
That know to walk with nature hand in hand
And find new cheer in every change and chance,
Not thinking, when the long grey days advance
And summer’s gold is dying, hope is less ;
But proving lightly all things’ goodness.”*

So swung we slowly up that lazy flood,
Rejoicing in the gladness of the time,
Until its course did leave the open plains

And turned into a forest, intertwined
So closely o'er our heads with knitted boughs
And charm of woven leaves, that we could see
No glimpse of sun nor glitter of the clear
Sweet firmament, nor any moving thing,
But only heard dim splashes in the flood
Of water-rat or duck and distant chirp
Of birds that far above our heads climbed up
To hymn the mounting chariot of the sun.

In that dim emerald shadow, some strange peace
And spell of haunting quiet seemed to brood
And soften all the voices of the wood
And rustle of the leafage to repose.
Above us rose the high steep flowered banks,
Heavy with fragrances from unseen bells
Exhaled of sweet and drowsy-scented flowers,
And all around the columns of the trees
Stretched dimly in the twilight, like the aisles
Of some immense cathedral, where the voice
Of praise and joy is hushed to reverent prayer.
And there no bird or beast did seem to dwell
Nor breeze to creep and sigh among the trees ;
But in its own mysterious sanctity
The forest lay and waited for the voice
Of some high champion that should break the charm
And win the secret of those mystic deeps.

The air grew darker, and a fresher breeze
Sprang up and told us of the waning day ;
And then the oarsman laid aside his blade
And loosed the wide sail from the tapering mast,
Wherein the glad air gathered did so swell
And struggle, that the boat leapt swiftly on
Between the shelving woodways. And anon
The gold of sunset flamed in through the mask

Of thinning trees, and then the prow was free
 From that dark pass of overhanging wood,
 And the day's light was large on us again.

The river lapsed, through fringing marish plants
 And ranks of rustling reeds, into the glass
 Of a clear lakelet, where the white discs lay,
 Gold-hearted, in the quiet, and our stem
 Cut through the fronded lake-weeds grudgingly,
 And won slow way toward the other shore,
 Where, with a hollow roar, the river leapt
 And fell into a dark and shaded cave.

There landed we and moored the barge with ropes,
 And, following our guides, made shift to win,
 Athwart a rocky passage, to a screen
 Of netted boughs and bushes that shut out
 For us the blue horizon's golden marge.
 Some time we struggled through the arduous growth
 Of underwood and brambles, intertwined
 With scarlet-blossomed creepers, till at length
 The last boughs closed behind us and we stood
 Upon the lower slope of a tall hill
 And gazed into the sunset with rapt eyes.

A wide deep champaign stretched before our view,
 Encircled with a sapphire chain of hills,
 On whose high crests the crown of sunset lay,
 Hallowing the landscape with a blaze of gold.

Fair and most awful was the majesty
 Of that day's death upon the guardian hills,
 Wrapt in the visible glory of the Lord ;
 And with one impulse, as the budded flames
 Of imminent heaven lay on us, we all
 Fell down upon our knees and worshippèd,
 As knowing the great God was surely there.

So knelt we all in silence, till the sun

Had faded from the westward, and the grey,
Washed with pale gold, that fills the interspace
’Twixt ended day and night, held all the air
With its mild tender afterglow. Then he
Whose brow was kingly with the banded gold
Arose and went a little way aside
Within some trees, that stood apart from us
About the casting of an arbalest,
And made as if he sought for something there ;
And coming, in a little, back to us,
He took my hand, and signing to the rest
To follow, led us all into a nook,
Wherein tall oak-trees circled round a rock
Of moss-veined marble. Therein entering,
A fitful radiance, as it were the play
Of glancing diamonds, glittered in our eyes,
And looking round, we saw where from the stone
A fair clear water trickled, drop by drop,
Between lush webs of golden-threaded moss,
And fell in jewelled sprays of liquid light
Upon the crystal pebbles. Very pure
And clear it was, and so unearthly bright
In the dim twilight of that shadowy place,
We doubted not but here our quest was filled
And this was e’en that fountain where our flesh,
Being laved, should put off sad and weary age
And clothe itself anew with goodly youth.

Then he who led us signed to us to drink,
For this was that same water we had sought
And wearied for so long by sea and land.

Albeit, for a space we could not stir
For wonderment, commingled with strange awe
And ravishment of our fulfilled desires,
That was nigh pain for very mightiness.

And then Blas stepped toward that trickling thread
Of crystal, and did stoop him down to drink ;
And ere his knees touched earth, I, following,
Bent down my hand into the rippled pool,
That lay beneath the downfall of the rill,
And drawing back an instant for surprise
At the most deathly coldness of the stream,
Made shift to gather water for a draught
Within the hollowed middle of my palm.

It scattered into diamonds through the chinks
Of my unnervèd fingers and did leave
So scant a pool of fluid in my hand,
That I was fain to stoop and fill again,
With more attent precaution, ere I wet
My lips with it. I filled my two joined palms,
And was about to raise them to my mouth,
Nay, almost steeped my lips, when suddenly,
Reflected in the streamlet, I was ware
Of some strange light that was made visible
From out the dusk above, and, looking up,
I spied a moonèd wonder in the air,
Full of strange lights and mystic harmonies
Of blending colour ; and as I did gaze,
I saw a great white cross, that grew and burnt
In its fair middle. Wonder and great awe
Unclasped my hands and brought them to my face,
To hide from my weak sight that awful light,
Whereby the unwilling water once again
Did have its liberty and showered down,
Like broken jewels, back into the pool.
And as I knelt, with awed and hidden eyes,
I heard a voice that spake from out the bell
Of that miraculous flower, most reverend
And awful, as it were the living God ;

And these words smote my hearing : “ *Foolish men,*
That thought God like another of yourselves,
That make a work and set it up for good
And after look again and know it ill
And straightway raze and build it up anew,
Repenting of the framework of your hands,—
Know that the Lord of all cannot repent
Nor turn again His ordered harmonies
Of life and death and nature, saying not,
‘I have not wrought it seemly—I repent!’
Nor can His hands undo what He has done.

“ *O fools and hard of heart ! in all these years*
Have ye then never read earth’s parable
Of day and night alternate, seed and fruit,
That tells you dusk must be ere light can come ?
Lo, in the fields the summer’s lavish bloom
Is spent and wasted by the autumn’s breath
And dies with winter, to revive with spring ;
And all things fill their order, birds and beasts
And all that unto earthly weal pertains.
Nor will the spheric working change its course
Nor slacken for the prayers of foolish men,
That lift fond voice for what their baby eyes
Deem good and all-sufficient in desire,
Seeing only, in their circumscribed scope,
A segment of the circle of God’s love.

“ *So may not the renewing of lost youth*
Be won but through the natural way of death,
And man must,—like an ear of corn, that droops
And withers in the ground before it stir
And sprout again with gay and goodly bloom,—
Yield up his wayworn flesh and weary soul
Unto the soothing rest of friendly death,
Ere a new fire shall stir the curdled blood

*Of age to a new ardour and the soul
Be clad afresh with robes of lusty youth.*

*“Wherefore know ye that, of a certainty,
None shall have life, excepting first he die.
And therefore is this water cold as death ;
For through its death is life the quicklier won.
Wherefore, if ye repent of your desire
And will to wear in weariness of eld
The sad remainder of your lagging years,
Rather than dare the icy plunge of death,
Depart and purge your hearts of foolish hope.”*

With that it ceased : and we, for wonderment
And awe, awhile could neither move nor speak ;
But still that splendour hung upon the air,
And still we veiled our eyes for reverence.

Then Perez rose, and, coming to the brink
Of that miraculous water, knelt and said :

“ Lord, I have haste for youth and fear not death,
For joy of that great hope that is beyond.”

So lightly he addressed himself to drink
Of that clear stream ; and we, that watched him do,
When as the water touched him, saw his face,
As 'twere an angel's, with heroic love
And faith transfigured for a moment's space ;
And then such glory broke from that high cross
And shone athwart his visage, that we fell
Aswoon upon the grass for fear and awe,
And had no further sense of what befell.

When life again returned into my brain,
The night was wasted, and the early dawn
Was golden in the Orient. As my eyes
Grew once more open to the light of day,
I found myself outstretched upon the sand
Of that fair shore, where we had landed first,

Hard by our place of entry in the wood.

Around me were my comrades ; some, like me,
Awaking from the trance of that strange sleep,
And others working on the caravel,
That lay high up upon the waveless strand,
Striving to push her down to meet the tide
That crawled up slowly from the outer sea.

But every sign of our adventurings
In that fair city, with those goodly men,
And of that wondrous fountain of the hills,
Was vanished. In the tangles of the wood,
The fair white dwellings we had seen with eyes,
When first the sunset led us to the place,
Had disappeared, nor in the forest's close
Green front of woven boughs, that stood opposed
Toward the ocean, was there visible
A single opening, wherethrough we might chance
Again upon the cloistered woodland way,
That led us to the wonder-lovely town.
Nor was there any sign or any trace
Of habitance of men or mortal use
Therein : but all was as no human foot,
Save ours, had trodden on the silver sand.

At this we marvelled greatly and most like
Would have misdoubted all to be a dream,
But that there lay beside us on the strand
Our comrade, Perez, not—as first it seemed
To us—asleep, but—as we soon knew—dead.
And still his visage wore the wondrous smile
Of deathless ravishment it had put on
With the clear draught of that miraculous fount.

And so we knew that it had been no dream,
But that our eyes had seen our hearts' desire,
And God himself had surely talked with us.

Long with persistent hope we searched the shore
Around the little harbour on all sides,
So haply we might once more light upon
The woodway leading to the inland plain
And its blithe wonders : but the silent trees
Were secret and would show no trace of it.

And so with heavy hearts we left our search
And made a grave for burial of the dead,
And laid him there with a sad reverence,
With wail and music of a funeral song ;
For very dear the man had been to us,
Being of a noble nature and approved
In all renown of worth and steadfastness.

Then sadly from a little smooth-stemmed tree
We rove a branch and hewing it in twain,
Made shift to fashion of the peeled white wood
The rude resemblance of the blessed Rood
And planted it for memory on the grave.
And as we did this thing, the forest air
Was voiceful with the carol of a bird,
That piped and piped as though he ne'er should die.
So joyous was his song and full of hope,
It seemed as if the angel of the dead
Had entered in the semblance of a fowl
And sang to give us lightening of our grief.

And so it came to pass that with the song
Our hearts were comforted and some did deem
They saw himself that stood upon the strand
And beckoned to us not to tarry there
Nor strive against the given will of God,
But turn our prow from off that hallowed shore.

We waited not for bidding, but launched out
And made the swift keel whistle through the surge.

FROM "ASPECT AND PROSPECT"

I

No gods have we to trust to, new or olden ;
The blue of heaven knows their thrones no more :
The races of the gods in death are holden :
Their pale ghosts haunt the icy river's shore.
Availeth not our beating at their door :
There is no presence in their halls beholden ;
The silence fills their jewelled thrones and golden ;
The shadow lies along their palace-floor.

And lo ! if any set his heart to singing,
Thinking to witch the world with love and light,
Strains of old memories set the stern chords ringing ;
The morning answers with the songs of night.
For who shall sing of pleasance and delight,
When all the sadness of the world is clinging
About his heart-strings and each breeze is bringing
Its burden of despairing and despite ?

Help is there none : night covers us down-lying
To sleep that comes unneath with devious dreams :
The morning brings us sadness but and sighing :
We gather sorrow from the noontide beams :
And if a man set eyes on aught that seems
An oasis of peace, he finds, on nighing,
Its promise false, and, sad almost to dying,
Turns from the mirage and its treacherous streams.

II

And yet one hope by well-nigh all is cherished,—
 Albeit many hold it unconfest,—
 The dream of days that, when this life has perished
 And all its strife and turmoil are at rest,
 Shall rise for men out of some mystic West,—
 A paradise of peace, where death comes never
 And life flows calmly as some dreamy river
 That wanders through the Islands of the Blest ;

A dream of love-lorn hearts made whole of sorrow,
 Of all life's doubts and puzzles fled by,
 Of severed lives reknit in one to-morrow
 Of endless bliss beneath the cloudless sky ;
 A dream of lands where hope shall never die,
 But in the fair clear fields, browbound with moly
 Our dead desires shall wander, healed and holy,
 And over all a mystic peace shall lie ;

A peace that shall be woven of old sadness
 And bitter memories grown honey-sweet,
 Where our lost hopes shall live again in gladness,
 Chaining the summer to their happy feet ;
 Where never fulness with desire shall meet
 Nor the sweet earth divide from the clear heaven,
 Nor mortal grossness shall avail to leaven
 The ecstasy of that supernal seat.

From "Songs of Life and Death."

FROM "THE PLAGUE"

THREE rooms they had, poor, but yet not without
Some touch of grace and comfort to conceal
Their poverty. The place was bright and warm
With gorgeous shells and corals, red and gold,
Rose-pink and pearly, that the husband's care
And father's thought had brought as memories
Of cruises in the wondrous southern seas ;
And spangled foreign birds, that once had hopped
And chirruped 'mid the palm and banian boughs,
In the clear air of golden-stranded isles,
Under the blue of rainbow-flowered skies,
With their emblazoned plumage, emerald
And gold and purple, lighted up the place
With an unreal unfamiliar air
Of foreign splendour. Very dear to them,
For whom long use had sanctified its walls
And love had lent its very poverty
A beauty of its own, the dwelling was,—
To them, who never in their lives, perhaps,
Had seen a field of cowslips all in bloom
Nor gathered violets in the early spring ;

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Meantime, the money he had left with them,
To fend them from privation and avert
The grim necessity of ceaseless toil

For scanty bread, though hoarded with close care,
Was all expended, and the stern, hard times
Exacted labour far beyond their wont.
One after one the little luxuries
And fanciful adornments, that the lost
Had gathered with such loving care for them
Were bartered for bare food, and naked walls
Joined with wan looks to make the place look drear,
That erst had worn so homely bright an air.

From "London City Poems."

QUIA MULTUM AMAVIT

[At an inquest held at the Whitehorse Tavern, before Mr. Cooper, Coroner for the Western district, on the body of Eliza Farrell, unfortunate female, found drowned below Waterloo Bridge on Monday last, Rose Farrell said, "Deceased was my sister. She was an unfortunate. She was unmarried. She had worked as a seamstress till trade was so bad last year that she could not earn a living at the prices paid by the sweaters, and she then went upon the streets." Witness believed she would never have done so but for her two illegitimate children, of whom she was passionately fond. Witness had no doubt that deceased's mind had been affected by their death. They died of neglect and starvation, owing to a woman, whom deceased paid to take care of them, having spent the money in drink. She paid the woman every penny she could scrape together, and witness had known her sell the dress off her back to make up the weekly money. Deceased came to her on Saturday night, after having been to see the children, and told her she had found they were dead and had been already buried by the parish. She seemed quite distracted, and rushed out of the house like a mad thing, and witness had never seen her again. The photograph produced (found on deceased) was that of the children. After a few remarks from the coroner, the jury returned a verdict of "Suicide in a state of temporary insanity."—*Extract from daily paper.*]

Just a drowned woman, with death-draggled hair
And wan eyes, all a-stare ;
The weary limbs composed in ghastly rest,
The hands together prest,
Tight holding something that the flood has spared,
Nor even the rough workhouse folk have dared
To separate from her wholly, but untied
Gently the knotted hands and laid it by her side.

A piteous sight,—yet not without some sign
Of handiwork divine ;
Some faint, mysterious traces of content
About the brows, unbent

At last from toil and misery,—some mark
 Of child-like, tired composure in the stark,
 Wan features, on whose calm there is imprint
 At last the seal of rest.

See, she was fair,—and now she's rid of strife,
 She's comelier than in life ;
 For death has smoothed the tresses of her hair
 And stroked the lines of care,
 With no ungentle hand, from off her brow.
 She seems at peace at last,—no matter how.
 Death has been angel-sweet to her tired soul ;
 She has no need of dole.

You know her story ? Just the sad, old tale,
 Whose victims never fail !
 Common enough and mean, but yet not quite
 Without its gleam of light ;
 Not all devoid of some redeeming spark
 Of nobleness to lighten its grim dark.
 You turn away. You've heard of many such ?
 "She was so wicked !" But she loved so much.

I tell you, this poor woman you despise,
 From whom you turn your eyes,
 Loved with an ardour, side by side with which
 Our lives, so seeming rich
 In virtues and in grandeurs, fade away
 Into the dusk, as night before the day.
 Yet of her life you fear to hear me tell.
 "She was so wicked !" But she loved so well.

You saw the portrait taken from her grasp,
 Stiffened in Death's cold clasp?
 Two little children, poorly clad and plain,
 Sun-scorched and worn with pain,
 Wan with mean cares, too early for their years,
 Their child-eyes eager with unchildish fears
 And sordid, bitter yearnings. "But a smutch!"
 You say. "And after all it's nought to me
 What was her life and what her hopes might be.
 She was so wicked!" Oh, she loved so much!

True, a mere daub, whereon the beneficent sun
 Has written, in faint, dun,
 Unbeauteous lines, a hard and narrow life,
 Wherein dull care was rife
 And little thought of beauty or delight
 Relieved the level blackness of the night:
 And yet I would not change those pictured two
 For all the cherubs Raphael ever drew.

Two little faces, plain enough to you,
 Nothing of bright or new;
 Such faces as one meets amongst each crowd,
 Sharp-visaged and low-browed;
 And yet to her, her picture-books of heaven,
 The treasures from which the scanty leaven,
 Wherewith she stirred her poor mean life to joy,
 Was drawn,—pure gold from her without alloy.

They were her all, and by no sacred tie,
 No pure maternity.
 To her the name of wife had been denied.
 In sin she lived and died.

She was an outlaw from the pale of right,
 And yet there was that in her had such might,
 That she would not have shamed our dear Lord Christ.
 She loved, and that sufficed.

They were her shame and pride, her hope and fear,
 To her how dreadly dear
 We scarce can feel. You happy, virtuous wives,
 Whose quiet, peaceful lives
 Flow on, unstirred by misery or crime,
 Can have no thought how high these souls can climb
 For love ; with what a weird, unearthly flame
 These wretched mothers love their babes of shame ;
 How they can suffer for them, dull and mean
 As they may seem, and sell their souls to screen
 Their darlings, dealing out their hearts' best blood,
 Drop after drop, to buy them daily food.

And so for years she toiled for them, as none
 Could ever toil save one
 Who had nought else to care for, night and day,
 Until her hair grew grey
 With labour such as souls in Dante's hell
 Might have been bound to, and with fiends as fell
 To act as her taskmasters and compel
 The poor, thin fingers ;—yet was honest still
 For many a weary day and night, until
 She found, with aching heart and pain-crazed head,
 Her toil could not suffice to earn her children bread.

They were her all ; and she, ground down by want,
 With hollow eyes and gaunt,
 Saw but their misery, small beside her own,
 Heard but their hungry moan,

Could not endure their piteous looks, and sold
 Herself to infamy, to warm their cold,
 To feed their hunger and assuage their thirst,
 Not hers. And yet, folk say, she is accurst !

Cruel as fate was, there was yet in store
 More pain for her and more
 Fierce anguish. Famine and the plague combined,
 In league with her own kind,
 To steal from her her one source of content,
 The one faint gleam of higher things, that blent
 Its glimmer with her life's unbroken grey ;
 The one pale star, that turned her night to day,
 Sank in the chill of death's delivering wave,
 Extinguished in the grave.

Not even the omnipotence of Love
 Had power to rise above
 The sullen stern unpitying sweep of Fate,
 That left her desolate.
 O wretched mother ! Wretched time of ours !
 When all enlightenment's much-vaunted powers
 To save this Magdalen's all could only fail,
 When Love has no avail !

Starved even to death ! For this she'd sold her soul ;
 This was her striving's goal !
 Life had no longer aught that might suffice
 To hallow all its dreary want and vice.
 Nothing but death remained to her, the crown
 Of all whose lives are hopeless. So fell down
 Her star of life into the dusk of night,
 And she gave up the fight.

So calm and peaceful seemed the dark grey flood,
 Foul with much human blood.
 God help her ! Death was kinder than the world.
 The sullen waters whirled
 A moment o'er a circling splash, and then
 She was forgotten from the world of men
 And it was nought to her what folk might say.
 Quiet at last she lay.

I know not if this poor soul's martyrdom
 For you be wholly dumb.
 To me, I own, her sin seems holier far
 Than half our virtues are ;
 For hers was of that ore which, purged of dross,
 Yields gold that might have gilded Christ's own cross
 And He have smiled. And yet you fear her touch ?
 "She was so wicked !" But she loved so much.

And of her common, mean and awful fate
 Our righteous ones will prate,—
 A fruitful text for homily !—until
 Another come to fill
 Her vacant place. And yet none sees the bloom
 Of love, that opened in her life's blank gloom
 And made it angel-bright. Folk turn aside
 And know not how a martyr lived and died.

"Accursèd," say they, "is the suicide.
 In sin she lived and died.
 We have in her, and she in us, no part.
 Our lives, thank heaven ! dispart.
 At least we're holier than she." Alas !
 My brethren, when reflected in God's glass,

I doubt me much if many of our lives
Will, when the day of reckoning arrives,
Or all our virtues, with her sin compare
Or as her life be fair.

Even grim Death was pitiful to her ;
Her rest he did not stir.
Shall we be, who with her drew common breath,
Less pitiful than Death ?
We, who have heard how Christ once lived and died,
With whom His love is fabled to abide,
Shall we avoid a poor dead sinner's touch ?
So wicked, say we ? Oh, she loved so much !

For me, I cannot hold her life's long pain
To have been all in vain.
I cannot think that God will let her go,
After this life of woe ;
Cannot believe that He, whose deathless love
She aped so well, will look on from above
With careless righteousness, while she sinks down
Into hell's depths, and with a pious frown,
Leave her to struggle in the devil's clutch.
True, she was wicked ;—but she loved so much.

From "London City Poems."

THE BALLAD OF SHAMEFUL DEATH

“ Le regard calme et haut
Qui damne tout un peuple autour d'un échafaud.”

BAUDELAIRE.

I go to an evil death, to lie in a shameful grave,
And I know there is never a hope and never a God that
can save ;
Yet I smile, for I know that the end of my toil and my
striving is come ;
I shall sleep in the bosom of death, where the voice of
the scorners is dumb.

I go in the felons' cart, with my hands bound fast with
the cord,
And nothing of brave or bright in the death that I ride
toward :
The people clamour and jeer, with a fierce and an evil
glee,
And the mothers and maids that pass do shudder to look
on me.

For the deed that I did for men, the life that I crown
with death,
Was a crime in the sight of all, a flame of the pest-wind's
breath ;
And the good and the gentle pass with a sad and a
drooping head,
As I go to my punished crime, to lie with the felon dead.

THE BALLAD OF SHAMEFUL DEATH 55

But lo! I am joyful and proud, as one that is newly
crowned :

I heed not the gibes and the sneers and the hates that
compass me round ;

I come not, with drooping head, to the death that a
felon dies ;

I come as a king to the feast, with a deathless light in
mine eyes.

I ride with a dream in mine eyes and the sound of a
dream in mine ears,

And my spirit wanders again in the lapse of the bygone
years ;

I smile with the bygone hope and I weep for the bygone
grief,

And I weave me the olden plans for the world's and the
folk's relief.

I build me over again the time of my yearning youth,
When my heart was sick for men's grief, and my glad-
ness failed me for ruth ;

For I saw that their lives were weary and maddened
with bitter toil,

And there came no helper to heal, no prophet to purge
the soil.

I mind me how all the joys a man, in his manhood's
prime,

May have in the new sweet world and the strength of
his blossom-time,

Were saddened and turned to gall by the cry of the
world's lament,

That withered the roses' bloom and poisoned the violets'
scent.

56 THE BALLAD OF SHAMEFUL DEATH

My heart is full of the thoughts that gathered within
my soul
And the anguish that held my life at the sight of my
fellows' dole ;
I mind me how, day by day, the passion grew in my
breast,
The voices cried in my sleep, and hindered my heart
of rest.

It rises before me now, in its fragrance ever the
same,
The time when my soul found peace and my yearning
soared like a flame,
The day when my shapeless thought took spirit and
speech and form,
The hour when I swore alone to front the fire and the
storm.

It rises before me now, the little lane by the wood,
With the golden-harvested fields, where the corn in its
armies stood,
The berries brown in the hedge, the eddying leaves en
the breeze,
And the spirits that seemed to speak in the wind that
sighed through the trees.

The path where I went alone, in the midst of the
swaying sheaves,
Through the landscape glowing with gold and crimson
of autumn leaves ;
The place where my full resolve rose out of my tears
and sighs,
Where my life was builded for me and my way lay clear
in mine eyes.

THE BALLAD OF SHAMEFUL DEATH 57

I mind me the words I spoke, the deeds that I did to
save,
The life that I lived to rescue the world from its living
grave ;
I mind me the blows I smote at the thronéd falsehood
and blame,
The comfort I spoke for the lost, the love that I gave
to shame.

I mind me of all the hates that gathered about my
strife,
The gibes that poisoned my speech, the lies that
blackened my life,
The fears that maddened the folk, the folly that shrank
with dread
From the love I spoke for the live, the hope I held for
the dead.

For the folk, with their purblind souls, chose rather to
live and die
In the olden anguishful slough, to weary and groan and
sigh
In the old familiar toil and the old unvarying hate,
Than rise to a joy unknown, a love to free them from
fate.

And the words that I spoke for love, the deeds that I
did for hope,
The future I showed for life in the new sweet credence's
scope,
They deemed them a tempting of hell, a blasphemy and
a crime ;
They thought the angel a fiend, that called them out of
their slime.

58 THE BALLAD OF SHAMEFUL DEATH

The yearning that cried in their breasts, that met mine
own like a flood,
They thought to quench it with fire, to stay its passion
with blood,
To deaden my voice with death, (their own should be
silent then ;)
And so I come to atone for the love that I bore to men.

My enemies laugh in their glee, as the people jeer at
my fate ;
They know not the seed of love that lies at the heart of
hate :
They give me hatred for love and death for the life I
brought ;
But I smile, for I know that love shall come at the last,
unsought.

I look far on in the years, and see the blood that I
shed
Crying a cry in men's ears, crying the cry of the
dead ;
I see my thought and my hope fulfilling my work for
men
In the folk that jeer at me now, the lips that spat at me
then.

I know that for many a year my life shall be veiled with
shame,
That many an age shall hate me and make a mock of
my name ;
I know that the fathers shall teach their children many
a year
To hold my hope for a dread and know my creed for
a fear

THE BALLAD OF SHAMEFUL DEATH 59

But I know that my work shall grow in the darkness
ever the same ;
Its seed shall stir in the earth in the shade of my evil
fame ;
My thought shall conquer and live, when the sound of
my doom is fled
And my name and my crime are buried, to lie with
the unknown dead.

Wherefore I smile as I go, and the joy at my heart is
strong,
And I gaze with a peace and a hope on the cruel glee
of the throng ;
I live in my thought and my love, I conquer Time with
my faith,
And I ride with a deathless hope to crown my living
with death.

I loved thee, beautiful Death, in the fresh sweet time
of the spring,
And I will not fail from my troth in the wind of the
axe's swing ;
I come to thy bridal bed, O Death my beloved, I come !
I shall sleep in thine arms at the last, when the voice of
the scoffers is dumb.

O friends that are faithful yet, if your love shall bear me
in mind
With a graven stone on the tomb where I sleep with
my felon kind,
Write me as one that fell in the way of a punished
crime,
“Hated of men he died, in the heart of the evil
time !”

And yet I would not be thought to glose o'er my full
 stern fate
 Or leave weak words of complaint for the ages that lie
 in wait.
 Rase out the final words; I will rest with the first
 content;
 "Hated of men he died" shall stand for my monument.

I was never in love with the praise nor afraid of the
 censure of fools:
 Mean they as well as they may, they were ever the
 dastard's tools.
 Strike out the words of complaint; I will stand by the
 rest alone:
 "Hated of men" shall pass for the roll of my virtues on
 stone.

And yonder on in the years, some few of the wise,
 peradventure,
 Shall read in the things laid bare the truth of my life-
 long venture,
 Shall see my life like a star in the shrouding mist of the
 ages,
 And set my name for a light and a patriot's name in
 their pages.

And then shall the clearer sight and the tenderer thought
 fulfil
 The things that I left unsaid, the words that are lacking
 still:
 A poet shall set my name in the gold of his noble rhyme;
 "Hated of men he died, in the heart of the evil time."

From "Ballads and Romances."

THE RIME OF REDEMPTION

“ Traditur etiam nonnullos vi pervincente
amoris ipsum contra summum Domini iudicium
prævaluisse.”—*Euseb. de Fid. rebus Epist.*

THE ways are white in the moon's light,
Under the leafless trees ;
Strange shadows go across the snow,
Before the tossing breeze.

The night, meseems, is full of dreams,
Ghosts of the bygone time :
Full many a sprite doth walk to-night
Over the soundless rime.

The burg stands grim upon the rim
Of the steep wooded height ;
In the great hall, the casements tall
Flame with the fireside light.

From the hearth's womb, athwart the gloom,
Rays out the firelight red :
Sir Loibich there before the flare
Sits in a dream of dread.

The tower-light glows across the snows,
In the black night defined :
The cresset-fire flares high and higher,
Tossed by the raging wind.

The knight sits bent, with eyes intent
Upon the dying fire ;
Sad dreams and strange in sooth do range
Before the troubled sire.

He sees the maid the past years laid
Upon his breast to sleep,
Long dead in sin, laid low within
The grave unblest and deep.

He sees her tears, her sobs he hears,
Borne on the shrieking wind ;
He sees her hair, so golden-fair,
Stream out her form behind.

He hears her wail, with lips that fail,
To him to save her soul ;
He sees her laid, unhouselèd,
Under the crossless knoll.

His heart is wrung, his soul is stung
To death with memories :
His face grows white as the moon's light
And all his words are sighs.

“ Ah would, dear Christ, my tears sufficed
To ransom her ! ” he cries :
“ Sweet heaven, to win her back from sin,
I would renounce the skies.

“ Might I but bring her suffering
To pardon and to peace,
I for mine own sin would atone,
Where never pain doth cease :

“I for my part would gnaw my heart,
Chained in the flames of hell ;
I would abide, unterrified,
More than a man shall tell.”

The flame burns red ; he bows his head
Upon his joining hands ;
The wraiths of old are shown and told
Upon the dying brands.

A hoarse scream tears athwart his ears,
Strange howls are in the air ;
The wolves do stray in search of prey
Across the moorlands bare.

Red eyes flame forth from south to north,
The beasts are all a-chase ;
God help the wight that goes to-night
Among the wild wood-ways !

The moon is pale, the night-winds wail,
Weird whispers fill the night :
“ Dear heart, what word was that I heard
Ring out in the moonlight ?

“ Methought there came to me my name,
Cried with a wail of woe ;
A voice whose tone my heart had known
In the days long ago.”

'Twas but the blast that hurried past,
Shrieking among the pines ;
The souls that wail upon the gale,
When the dim starlight shines.

Great God ! The name ! Once more it came
 Ringing across the dark !
“Loibich !” it cried. The night is wide,
 The dim pines stand and hark.

The lead-grey heaven by the blast is riven ;
 God ! How the torn trees shriek !
The wild wind soughs among the boughs,
 As though the dead did speak.

“Loibich ! Loibich ! My soul is sick
 With hungering for thee !
The night fades fast, the hours fly past ;
 Stay not, come forth to me !”

Great Heaven ! The doubt is faded out ;
 It was her voice that spake ;
He made one stride and open wide
 The casement tall he strake.

The cloudwrack grey did break away ;
 Out shone the ghostly moon ;
Off slid the haze from all the ways,
 Before her silver shoon.

Pale silver-rayed, out shone the glade,
 Before the castle wall,
And on the lea the knight could see
 A maid both fair and tall.

Gold was her hair, her face was fair,
 As fair as fair can be,
But through the night the blue corpse-light
 About her could he see.

She raised her face toward the place
Where Loibich stood adread ;
There was a sheen in her two een,
As one that long is dead.

She looked at him in the light dim
And beckoned with her hand :
“ Sir Knight,” she said, “ thy prayer hath sped
Unto the heavenly land.

“ Come forth with me : the night is free
For us to work the thing
That is to do, before we two
Shall hear the dawn-bird sing.”

He took his brand within his hand,
His dirk upon his thigh :
And he hath come, through dusk and gloom,
Where wide the portals lie.

“ Saddle thy steed, Sir Knight, with speed,
Thy faithfullest,” quoth she,
“ For many a tide we twain must ride
Before the end shall be.”

The steed is girt, black Dagobert,
Swift-footed as the wind ;
The knight leapt up upon his croup,
The maid sprang up behind.

A stately pair the steed doth bear
Upon his back to-night :
The sweatdrops rain from flank and mane,
His eyes start out for fright.

Her weight did lack upon his back ;
He trembled as he stood ;
It seemed as 'twere a death-cold air
Did freeze the courser's blood.

She threw the charms of her white arms
About Sir Loibich's neck :
It seemed as if 't had been a drift
Of snow on him did break.

The spurs are dyed deep in the side
Of the destrere amain ;
The leaves do chase behind his race
And far out streams his mane.

The wind screams past ; they ride so fast,—
Like troops of souls in pain
The snowdrifts spin, but none may win
To rest upon the twain.

So fast they ride, the blasts divide
To let them hurry on ;
The wandering ghosts troop past in hosts
Across the moonlight wan.

Then fly across the frozen floss,
Across the frost-starred mead :
Hill, wood and plain they cross amain ;
Hill, plain and wood succeed.

The wild wind drops, the snow-whirl stops,
Frost fades from grass and brere ;
The dim clouds die from out the sky
And forth the moon shines clear.

A sudden hush, and then a rush
Of magic melodies ;
A summer wood, with moon-pearls strewed
And jasmine-girdled trees.

The lady laid her hand of shade
Upon the hurrying horse,
And suddenly, upon the lea,
He halted in his course.

To them there came a fragrant flame,
A light of elfinry :
The haggard night poured forth delight
And flowers of Faërie.

A wondrous song did wind along
The moon-besilvered glades,—
And all the things the elf-night brings
Did glitter from the shades.

“ Light down, Sir Knight, in the moonlight ;
Light down and loose my hand ;
I must be gone ; but thou hast won
Unto the Faery land.”

“ By Christ His troth ! ” he swore an oath,
“ No Faery land for me,
Except thou light thee down to-night,
Therein with me to be.”

“ Alas, Sir Knight, I must this night
Harbour me far away ;
Far be't from thee to rest with me
Where I must dwell for aye.”

He smote his breast : "By Christ His rest,
No Faery land will I !
Rather in hell with thee to dwell
Than lonely in the sky !"

The thunder broke, the lightning-stroke
Fell down and tore the earth ;
The firm ground shook, as though there took
The world the throes of birth.

The elf-song died, the moon did hide
Her face behind the haze,
And once again they ride amain
Across the wild wide ways.

The night grew black ; the grey cloudwrack
Whirled fast across the skies ;
What lights are those the white snow throws
Reflected in their eyes ?

What flames are those the blackness shows,
Rising like rosy flowers
Up to the lift ? What ruddy rift
Shines out in the night hours ?

The night is wide : they ride and ride,
The lights grow bright and near ;
There comes a wail upon the gale
And eke a descant clear.

There comes a plain of souls in pain
And eke a high sweet song,
As of some fate whose grief is great,
But yet whose hope is strong.

Aye louder grow the sounds of woe,
But the song sweeter still,
Until the steed doth slacken speed
At foot of a high hill.

The hazes grey before their way
Divided are in two ;
A wondrous sight midmost the night
Lies open to their view.

The hill is strewn beneath the moon
With strange and singing fires ;
In every flame a soul from shame
And soil of sin aspires.

From every fire, higher and higher,
The song of hope doth rise :
These are the sprites that God delights
To fit for Paradise.

“Light down, Sir Knight ; I pray, alight ;
This is the purging-place ;
Here shalt thou win to cast off sin
And come to Christ His grace.”

“By Christ His troth !” he swore an oath,
“That will I not,” quoth he,
“Unless thou too, my lover true,
Therein shalt purgèd be.”

“Would God,” she said, “the lot were laid
For me to enter here !
Alack ! my stead is with the dead,
All in the place of fear.

“But thou light down ; the gate is thrown
Wide open in the ward ;
See where they stand on either hand,
Angels with downdropt sword.”

“By Christ His rest !” he smote his breast ;
“No grace of God will I !
Rather with thee damnèd to be
Than lonely in the sky !”

The night closed round, there came a sound
Of trumpets in the air ;
The steed leapt on, the fires were gone,
And on the twain did fare.

Through storm and night again their flight
They urge o’er hill and plain :
What sounds smite clear upon the ear
Through dusk and wind and rain ?

“Meseems I heard as if there stirred
A sound of golden lyres ;
Methought there came a sweet acclaim
Of trumpets and of choirs.

“So sing the saints, where never faints
The sunlight from the skies ;
So pulse the lyres among the choirs
Of God in Paradise.”

A singing light did cleave the night ;
High up a hill rode they ;
The veils of heaven for them were riven
And all the skies poured day.

The golden gate did stand await,
The golden town did lie
Before their sight, the realms of light
God-builded in the sky.

The steed did wait before the gate ;
Sheer up the street looked they ;
They saw the bliss in heaven that is,
They saw the saints' array.

They saw the hosts upon the coasts
Of the clear crystal sea ;
They saw the blest, that in the rest
Of Christ forever be.

The choirs of God pulsed full and broad
Upon the ravished twain ;
The angels' feet upon the street
Rang out like golden rain.

They felt the sea of ecstasy
That flows about the throne ;
The bliss of heaven to them was given
Awhile to look upon.

Then said the maid, "Be not afraid ;
God giveth heaven to thee ;
Light down and rest with Christ His blest,
And think no more of me !"

Sir Loibich gazed as one amazed,
Awhile upon the place ;
Then, with a sigh, he turned his eye
Upon the maiden's face.

“By Christ His troth !” he swore an oath,
“No heaven for me shall be,
Except God give that thou shalt live
Therein for aye with me.”

“Ah, curst am I !” the maid did cry ;
“ My place thou knowest well ;
I must begone before the dawn,
To harbour me in hell.”

“By Christ His rest !” he beat his breast,
“Then be it even so ;
With thee in hell I choose to dwell,
And share with thee thy woe.

“Thy sin was mine. By Christ His wine,
Mine too shall be thy doom ;
What part have I within the sky,
And thou in hell’s red gloom ?”

The vision broke, as thus he spoke,
The city waned away :
O’er hill and brake, o’er wood and lake
Once more the darkness lay.

O’er hill and plain they ride again,
Under the night’s black spell,
Until there rise against the skies
The lurid lights of hell.

The night is wide : they ride and ride ;
The air with smoke grows crost,
And through the dark their ears may hark
The roaring of the lost.

The dreadful cries they rend the skies,
The plain is ceiled with fire :
The flames burst out, around, about ;
The heats of hell draw nigher.

Unfeared they ride ; against the side
Of the red flameful sky
Grim forms are shown, strange shades upthrown
From out hell's treasury :

Black grisly shapes of demon apes,
Grim human-headed snakes,
Red creeping things with scaly wings,
Born of the sulphur lakes.

The flames swell up out of the cup
Of endless agony,
And with the wind there comes entwined
An awful psalmody ;

The hymning sound of fiends around,
Rejoicing in their doom,
The fearsome glee of things that be
Glad in their native gloom.

Fast rode the twain across the plain,
With hearts all undismayed,
Until they came where all a-flame
Hell's gates were open laid.

The awful stead gaped wide and red,
To gulph them in its womb :
There could they see the fiery sea
And all the souls in doom.

There came a breath, like living death,
Out of the gated way :
It scorched his face with its embrace,
It turned his hair to grey.

Then said the maid, "Art not dismayed ?
Here is our course fulfilled :
Wilt thou not turn, nor rest to burn
With me, as God hath willed ?"

"By Christ His troth !" he swore an oath,
"Thy doom with thee I'll share,
Here will we dwell, hand-linked in hell,
Unseparate for e'er."

He spurred his steed ; the gates of dread
Gaped open for his course :
Sudden outrang a trumpet's clang
And backward fell the horse.

The ghostly maid did wane and fade,
The lights of hell did flee ;
Alone in night the mazèd wight
Stood on the frozen lea.

Out shone the moon ; the mists did swoon
Away before his sight,
And through the dark he saw a spark,
A welcoming of light.

Thither he fared, with falchion bared,
Toward the friendly shine ;
Eftsoon he came to where a flame
Did burn within a shrine.

A candle stood before the Rood,
Christ carven on the tree :
Except the shrine, there was no sign
Of man that he could see.

Down on his knee low louted he
Before the cross of wood,
And for her sprite he saw that night
Long prayed he to the Rood.

And as he prayed, with heart down-weighed,
A wondrous thing befell :
The air waxed white and through the night
There rang a silver bell.

The earth-mists drew before his view ;
He saw God's golden town ;
He saw the street, he saw the seat
From whence God looketh down.

He saw the gate transfigure,
He saw the street of pearl,
And in the throng, the saints among,
He saw a gold-haired girl.

He saw a girl as white as pearl,
With hair as red as gold :
He saw her stand among the band
Of angels manifold.

He heard her smite the harp's delight,
Singing most joyfully,
And knew his love prevailed above
Judgment and destiny.

Gone is the night ; the morn breaks white
Across the eastward hill ;
The knightly sire by the dead fire
Sits in the dawning chill.

By the hearth white, there sits the knight,
Dead as the sunken fire ;
But on his face is writ the grace
Of his fulfilled desire.

From "Ballads and Romances."

INTO THE ENCHANTED LAND

WHEN the end of the enchantment of the summer is at
hand

In the month that closes
The blue midsummer weather,
When the passionate red roses
Faint for the heat
And the lilies fold together
Their petals pale and sweet,—
In the burning noontide hazes
And the golden glory of the flowers that blazes
Over the happy valleys and the wold,
There swells to me a breeze ofttimes
Out of the dreams of old.
And in the breeze the murmur of old rhymes
Rises and falls,
Like some enchanted singing,
And my tired brow is fanned
By odours from the halls
Of dreamland, such as in the moonlight white
Float round a wandering knight,
When through the country of the elves he fares
And marvels at the dances,
That glitter through the moon-glow, and the ringing
Of elfin bells;
And through the fluttering of the frolic airs,
In all the song there swells

A voice well known to me of bygone days,
 That calls me to forsake
 The weary worldly ways
 And as of olden times my way to take
 Into the dreamland of the old romances,
 Into the enchanted land.

Down falls the evening on the weary plains,
 And I, I stand and wait
 Where, at the verge
 Of the green fields, the stains
 Of sunlight fade upon the trees that surge
 Out of the falling night,
 Dim as the dreamland's gate.
 And so there comes to me a flash of light
 Across the shadow and my faint eyes know
 The robe of her I love
 And the bright crown of tresses aureoled,
 Star-glorious, above
 Her face's rosy snow,
 Spangling the shades with gold.
 "Sweet love, sweet welcome! I had need of thee,
 Sore, sorest need!"
 Still doth she grow
 Nearer and lovelier till my arms may press
 Almost her charms and all my soul may feed
 Upon her loveliness.
 But lo! I clasp the wind
 And in mine arms entwined
 Is nothing but a fair and painted dream.
 "Dear love, why dost thou seem
 And torture me with hope in vain?"
 And the fair shape doth weep
 And comforteth my pain

With lovely looks and words of amity ;
 And so my yearnings sleep
 And there is peace once more for me.

“Come, love,” she saith, “the dream-gates gape
 for thee.

The hour of glamorous delight
 Is come for thee and me.
 Under the silver night
 We shall walk hand in hand
 In the enchanted land
 And see the moon-flowers blossom to the sound
 Of the sweet elfin tune,
 As in the days gone by.
 Dost thou not hear the horns of Faërie wound
 Among the elfland bowers
 And all the rush of splendid song that floods
 The silver winds that lie
 And idle in the pearl-work of the moon,
 Woven about the woods ?
 Come, love ! the day is dead,
 With all its weary hours,
 And ours is newly born.
 Thou shalt have easance of thy woes this night,
 Amid the glory of the flowers that swoon
 With magical delight,
 Ere in the sky creeps up the weary morn
 And the pale East grows red.”

So, in the pale faint flush of the twilight,
 Softly I ope the door
 And hand in hand,
 Across the fields we go, before
 The day is parted from the night,

Among the cloisters where the tall trees stand
White in the woodland ways,
Under the moonlight, till a wall of mist
Rises before us in the evening haze,
Silver and amethyst.
Then doth my love loose hands
And in the spangled green
Of the thick moss she stands
Within the wood-verge, where the sun has been
And is not faded quite ;
And to the hovering night
Sweet mystic lays
And songs she singeth, very pure and high,
Until there answereth
From out the heart-green of the woodbine maze
A magic singing, as it were
A woven music of the scents that lie
In all the night-flowers' breath ;
And with the song upon the fragrant air
Strange mystic memories do swell and die
Of Love and Life and Death.

The gate of dreamland opens to the singing
And hand in hand we go,
My love and I,
Along the woodways with the elf-songs ringing,
Under the silver night ;
And down the vistas of the trees, that lie
And bathe in the moonlight,
There swells to us a murmur sweet and low,
As of some magic river,
That glitters through its ranks of waving reeds
And makes the flower-bells quiver
With haunting melodies ;

And from its ferny nest
The runnel of a brooklet sings and speeds
Across the pearlèd network of the grass,
Murmuring its loveliest,
Songs of a heart at ease,
That in its joy doth pass
Into a tune ; and lo !
Upon the diamond ripples to our feet
A little shallop floats,
Out of a rush-work woven all and wrought
With pearls and ivory.
Then in the skiff do we
Embark and down the silver stream we fleet,
Under the thronging notes
Of the night-birds ;
And as we go,
The air is all astir with lovely things ;
Sweet music, twinned and fair with magic words,
Rises from elfin throats,
And in the leaves we see the rush and glow
Of jewelled wings.

There lies all glamour in the arching banks,
Through which our river runs :
Over us wing the dreams
And in the pale sweet trances of the moon,
Along the stretching glades,
The silver fawns of Faërie do pass,
White in the sweet white beams ;
And now and then the tune
Of horns is clear
And the elf-hunt sweeps by, with glittering ranks,
Across the velvet grass :
The king's tall knightly sons

Ride through the aisles, with many a douçepere ;
 And now there comes a throng
 Of snow-white maids,
 Gold-haired,
 That with sweet song
 And pleasance wander in the fragrant maze
 Of cool woodland ways,
 Sweet one with sweet one paired,
 All through the summer night,
 And win the enchanted air
 Unto melodious trances with the ring
 Of their flute-voices and the rare delight
 Of their gold-rippled hair,
 Soft as the songs they sing.

The high trees bend above us lovingly,
 As on the stream we go,
 Mingling their boughs above
 Into a flower-starred roof
 Of lovely greenery ;
 And through the night
 The fireflies glow
 And glitter, as it were
 The stars had left their places for delight
 And through the woodland air
 Sped, singing.
 The stream makes music to the cleaving prow,
 Answering the birds' descant
 And the soft ringing
 Of bindweed bells.
 The night is filled with spells
 Of old delight ;
 The summer air is hazed and jubilant
 With ripples of the glory of song-gold

And elfin blisses ;
 And in the lovely light,
 A maiden more than earthly fair to see,
 With moon-webs aureoled,
 My lady sits by me,
 Answering my thought with kisses.

The river shallows through the grass and flowers,
 Athwart the waning night ;
 And now the boat is gone
 From underneath our feet ;
 And eke the stream has faded
 Into the ripple of the white moonlight.
 So, in the midwood bowers
 I stand alone
 In the still time and sweet
 Before the hour when night and morning meet.
 Sweet sooth, the moon has braided
 The air with pearl
 And down the haunted glades
 The shadows dance and whirl
 Among the sheeny hosts of the grass-blades,
 In the cool glitter of the time :
 And lo ! my thought takes rhythm from their dances
 And to my lips comes rhyme
 And many a lovely tune,
 Such as the minstrels of the old romances
 Sang to the moon.

My singing echoes through the elfland aisles,
 Waking the silver bells,
 That lie and dream in the flower-sleep,
 Deep in the mossy dells ;
 And as I sing,

The timid rabbits creep
 From all their soft warm nests among the fern ;
 And in the wood-deeps, gold and silver strewn,
 The fawns stand listening.
 Then down the columned way,
 Through which the moonlight smiles,
 There rings the trample of a horse's feet.
 Nearer it grows along the ripple-play,
 Beside the tinkling burn,
 Until the silver armour of a knight
 Shines in the moon
 And a clear voice trolls songs of war and love,
 Ditties of strange and mystical delight,
 That through the trees do rove,
 Telling of Day and Night,
 Of Love and Life and Death,
 With strains as bright and sweet
 As is the linnet's breath.

My weak song ceases as I look on him :
 " Fair knight,
 Fair minstrel, teach me all thy might.
 I know thee as of old :
 Clear through the twilight of the legends dim,
 Thy name like gold
 Doth shine
 And the fair nobleness of thy white life
 Sweetens the lips of men,
 O Percivale, Christ's knight !"
 And then he gazes on me with mild eyes,
 And the clear rapture floods me like a wine
 Of some old Orient tale,
 Purging my heart from sighs
 And memories of strife.

And so he rides into the gloaming pale,
Scattering on every hand
Sweet singings, till they die upon the ear.
Then, looking round again,
I see the night has ceased
And in the dawning drear
My dream fades from me, as the skies are spanned
By the red bars of morn
And in the East
The cold grey day is born.

From "Ballads and Romances."

FROM "IN ARMIDA'S GARDEN"

GLUCK'S "ARMIDE,"

ACT II., SCENE 3: Introduction and Aria.

THIS is the land of dreams : these waving woods
And the dim sunlit haze that hangs on all
And the clear jewels of the murmuring stream ;
These flowered nooks through which the bird-notes fall,
Like silver spring-showers,—here sweet silence broods,
And here I dream.

Prone in the shadow of the flowers I lie
And watch the lizards glitter through the grass
And listen to the tinkle of the stream :
Unmindful of the weary hours that pass,
Here do I lie and let the years go by :
I dream and I dream.

Life and the world forsake me in the calm
Of these enchanted woodways, green and still,
Wherein the very sunlight's wavering gleam
Sleeps on the lazy ripples of the rill,
And in the mist of the droopt flowers' faint balm
I dream and I dream.

There is no future in these glades of ours,
Nor any whisper of the stern to-morrow ;
Life is a woven thing of a sunbeam :
Nor in the grass is any snake of sorrow,
Nor comes remorse again where 'mid the flowers
I dream and I dream.

Here are the bird-songs neither glad nor sad :
 Sleep drones in every note of their delight ;
 Not even throstles with the olden theme
 Of tender grieving sadden the pale night ;
 But veiled is all their song, as ’twere they had
Dream within dream.

Here are no roses of the sharp sweet scent,
 Nor the sad violets’ enchanted breath,
 Nor jasmines cluster by the slumbering stream ;
 But the drowsed hyacinths with umbels bent
 And the gold-hearted lilies of sweet death,
Flowers of a dream.

I know not if life is with me or how
 I come to lie and sleep away the years :
 I only know, but yesterday did seem
 Sad life amid a swarm of sordid fears
 And hopes. Then came the god of Sleep—and now
I dream and I dream.

There swell faint breaths to me of earthly jar,
 As ’twere a wild bee humming in the thyme,
 And the dim sounds of what pale mortals deem
 The aims of life come back like olden rhyme
 Upon mine ears, whilst, from the world afar,
I dream and I dream.

I hear the sweep of pinions in the air
 And see dim glories glitter through the skies,
 As if some angel from the blue extreme
 Of heaven strewed gold and balm of memories
 Upon the woods and the dim flowers that bear
Spells of a dream.

There hover faces o'er me oftentimes
 Of lovely women that I knew of old,
 Set like a jewel in a golden stream
 Of fairest locks ; and from the aureoled
 Sweet lips there swell faint echoes of old rhymes ;
(I dream and I dream).

And sweet white arms enclose me as I lie,
 (Still do I lie and fold me in a sleep) ;
 Yea, and faint-fluttering tresses, all a-gleam,
 Fall down about my brow full tenderly
 And wind me in a glamour soft and deep.
(I dream and I dream.)

Yet is there nothing that therein is rife
 That for the world forsaken makes me sigh,
 More than the empty motes of a sunbeam.
 Unheeding them, in the dim dream I lie ;
 Far from the flutter of the wings of Life,
I dream and I dream.

When wraiths of pleasure are so true and leal,
 Why should I seek for flesh and blood to love me ?
 Who shall tell what things are and what things seem ?
 I am content, unquestioning, to feel
 The folding of the shadow-arms above me.
I dream and I dream.

.

From "Ballads and Romances."

FROM "THE PACT OF THE
TWIN GODS"

.
So was there endless strife,
By land and sea,
'Twixt the gods Death and Life ;
And unto neither fell the mastery.
.

Then, on this wise,
After a resting-while,
Unto the frosty sire
Spake, with a dawn-sky's smile,
The great god Life,
Saying, "My brother,
What boots it that so long
We have done hurt unto each other
And to the world,
And have so often and so sore wrought wrong
To the sad race of men,—that we have hurled
The fair sky-orders from their base with fight,
So I, a god, of thee, another god
As great, might have the mastery ?
Now, of a truth, I see
That we are surely equal in our might
And all these years have trod
The battle all in vain ;

For Death and Life must be
 And may not change or wane,
 Nor the one have domain
 Over the other's fee.
 Wherefore I pray of thee that we do take
 Joined hands once more,
 And make
 A thing that shall be for a covenant
 Betwixt us against war
 And lawless strife ;
 A thing that shall of both our souls partake
 And all our attributes
 Shall share,
 As a fair tree that, by the gardener's knife
 Grafted to a plant of various kind, doth bear
 Twy-natured fruits ;
 A thing that shall be sad as violets' breath
 And blithesome as the breeze
 That in the spring,
 Among the blossomed trees,
 Doth float and sing ;
 That shall be sadder and more sweet than Death
 And gladder and more sweet than Life,
 That as a king betwixt us twain shall sit
 And with flower-bands
 Linking our hands,
 Shall lead us forth upon our various way,
 As two fair twins that play
 With joinèd hearts and lives together knit
 And have no thought of harm."
 And so the pact was sworn between the two,
 That they should work to do
 This charm ;
 And Life and Death clasped hands on it.

“THE PACT OF THE TWIN GODS” 91

Then Life brought flowers and breezes and sun-gold
And juices of the vine ;
And Death brought silver of the moonlight cold
And the pale sad woodbine.

Life brought clear honey of the buxom bees
And fruits of autumn-time ;
And Death brought amber from the murmuring seas
And fretwork of the rime.

God Life did rob the jasmine of its balm,
Death the pale lily's bells ;
Life brought a handful of the summer-calm,
Death of the wind that swells

And sighs about the winter-wearied hills ;
Life the spring heaven's blue,
Death brought the grey, that in the autumn fills
The skies with its sad hue.

And with these things of mingling life and death
Did the twin gods upbuild
A golden shape, which drew the goodliest breath
That ever bosom filled :

For it was lovesome as the risen sun
And pale as ended night,
Glad as the glance of an immortal one
And mild as the moon's light.

The form of it was white as is the snow
When the pale winter reigns,
And rosy-tinted as the even-glow
After the April rains.

The charm of day was in its violet eyes
 And eke the spells of night ;
 Therein one read of the gold Orient skies
 And the faint spring's delight.

And for a voice Life lent it all the tune
 That from lark-throats doth rise ;
 And pale Death added to it, for a boon,
 The sad sweet night-bird's sighs.

Its hands were warm as life and soft as death,
 Rosy as flowers and white
 As the pale lucent stone that covereth
 The graves in the moon's sight.

Its hair was golden as the sheer sun's shine,
 When the hot June rides far,
 And tender-coloured as the hyaline
 Of the pale midnight star.

Red was its mouth as is the damask rose
 And purple as night-shade,
 Most glad and sad, fulfilled of lovesome woes
 And joys that never fade.

Swift were its rosy golden-sandalled feet,
 Yet lingering as the night,
 And the soft wings that on the air did beat
 Were of the windflower's white.

And on its head they set a double crown,
 Golden and silver wrought,
 Wherein sweet emeralds for hope were sown
 And amethysts for thought.

Thus did the two gods make this lovesome thing,
To stand betwixt them twain ;
And therewithal they crowned the fair shape king
O'er them and suzerain.

And from that time there hath no more been strife
'Twixt these two gods of might ;
For evermore betwixten Death and Life
That creature of delight

Hath gone about the weary worldly ways,
Holding them hand in hand,
So that Death never on a mortal lays
His finger, but there stand

Beside him Life and that sweet shape which they
Have for their master made ;
And on like guise, when dawn hath lit the day,
Death walketh in the shade,

Hard by the sun and all the gauds of life :
And by them, without cease,
The winged shape goes and orders all their strife
To harmony and peace.

And if one ask which god he cherisheth
His brother god above,
Methinks his heart beats franklier for Death ;
For lo ! his name is Love.

CHANT ROYAL OF THE
GOD OF LOVE

O most fair God ! O Love both new and old,
That wast before the flowers of morning blew,
Before the glad sun in his mail of gold
Leapt into light across the first day's dew,
That art the first and last of our delight,
That in the blue day and the purple night
Holdest the heart of servant and of king,
Lord of liesse, sovran of sorrowing,
That in thy hand hast heaven's golden key
And hell beneath the shadow of thy wing,
Thou art my Lord to whom I bend the knee !

What thing rejects thine empery ? Who so bold
But at thine altars in the dusk they sue ?
Even the strait pale Goddess, silver-stoled,
That kissed Endymion when the spring was new,
To thee did homage in her own despite,
When, in the shadow of her wings of white,
She slid down trembling from her moonèd ring
To where the Latmian youth lay slumbering,
And in that kiss put off cold chastity.
Who but acclaim, with voice and pipe and string,
Thou art my Lord to whom I bend the knee ?

CHANT ROYAL OF THE GOD OF LOVE 95

Master of men and gods, in every fold
Of thy wide vans, the sorceries that renew
The labouring earth tranced with the winter's
cold

Lie hid, the quintessential charms that woo
The souls of flowers, slain with the sullen might
Of the dead year, and draw them to the light.
Balsam and blessing to thy garments cling :
Skyward and seaward, whilst thy white palms
fling

Their spells of healing over land and sea,
One shout of homage makes the welkin ring,
Thou art my Lord to whom I bend the knee !

I see thee throned aloft : thy fair hands hold
Myrtles for joy and euphrasy and rue :
Laurels and roses round thy white brows rolled,
And in thine eyes the royal heaven's hue :
But in thy lip's clear colour, ruddy bright,
The heart's blood burns of many a hapless wight.
Thou art not only fair and sweet as spring :
Terror and beauty, fear and wondering,
Meet on thy front, amazing all who see.
All men do praise thee, ay, and every thing :
Thou art my Lord to whom I bend the knee !

I fear thee, though I love. Who shall behold
The sheer sun blazing in the orbèd blue,
What while the noontide over hill and wold
Flames like a fire, except his mazèd view
Wither and tremble ? So thy splendid sight
Fills me with mingled gladness and affright.

96 CHANT ROYAL OF THE GOD OF LOVE

Thy visage haunts me in the wavering
Of dreams, and in the dawn, awakening,
I feel thy splendour streaming full on me.
Both joy and fear unto thy feet I bring :
Thou art my Lord to whom I bend the knee !

ENVOI

God above gods, high and eternal king !
Whose praise the symphonies of heaven sing,
I find no whither from thy power to flee
Save in thy pinions' vast o'ershadowing :
Thou art my Lord to whom I bend the knee !

From "Exotica."

RONDEL

Kiss me, sweetheart ; the spring is here
And love is lord of you and me.
The bluebells beckon each passing bee ;
The wild wood laughs to the flowered year :
There is no bird in brake or brere
But to his little mate sings he,
"Kiss me, sweetheart ; the spring is here
And love is lord of you and me."

The blue sky laughs out sweet and clear ;
The missel-thrush upon the tree
Pipes for sheer gladness loud and free ;
And I go singing to my dear,
"Kiss me, sweetheart ; the spring is here
And love is lord of you and me."

From "Exotica."

MADRIGAL GAI

THE summer-sunshine comes and goes ;
The bee hums in the heart of the rose :
Heart of my hope, the year is sweet ;
The lilies lighten about thy feet.

A new light glitters on land and sea ;
The turtles couple on every tree.
Light of my life, the fields are fair ;
Gossamers tangle thy golden hair.

The air with kisses is blithe and gay ;
Love is so sweet in the middle May.
Sweet of my soul, the brook is blue ;
Thine eyes with heaven have pierced it through.

Now is the time for kisses, now
When bird-songs babble from every bough.
Sweetest, my soul is a bird that sips
Honey of heaven from out thy lips.

From "Songs of Life and Death."

MADRIGAL TRISTE

IF we should meet
You and I,
My sweet,
In some fair land where under the blue sky
The scents of the fresh violets never die
And spring is deathless under deathless feet,
Should we clasp hands and kiss,
My sweet,
With the old bliss?
Would our eyes meet
With the same passionate frankness as of old,
When the fresh spring was in the summer's gold?
Ah, no! my dear.
Woe's me! our kisses are but frore;
The blossoms of our early love are sere
And will be fresh no more.

If we should stand,
You and I,
My sweet,
On that bright strand
Where day fades never and the golden street
Rings to the music of the angels' feet,
Would our rent hearts find solace in the sky?

MADRIGAL TRISTE

Should we lose heed,
My dear,
Of the sad years?
Would our souls cease to bleed
For the past anguish and our eyes grow clear,
In heaven, from all the furrows of the tears?
Ah, no! my dear.
Needs must we sigh and stand aloof.
Once riven,
God could not heal our love,
Even in heaven.

From "Songs of Life and Death."

THE KING'S SLEEP

“BURY me deep,” said the king,
“Deep in the mountain’s womb ;
For I am weary of strife.
Hollow me out a tomb,
So that the golden sun
Pierce not the blackness dun
Where I shall lie and sleep ;
Lest haply the light should bring
Again the stirring of life,
Or ever the time be come
To waken. Bury me deep.

“Let not the silver moon
Search out the graven stone
That lieth above my head,
In the tomb where I sleep alone,
Nor any ray of a star
Come in the night to unbar
The gates of my prison-sleep.
I shall awake too soon
From the quiet sleep of the dead,
When the trumps of the Lord are blown.
If you love me, bury me deep.

THE KING'S SLEEP

“I feel in my heart of hearts
There cometh a time for me,
Far in the future's gloom,
When there no more may be
Rest for my weary head,
When over my stony bed
The wind of the Lord shall sweep
And scatter the tomb in parts
And the voice of the angel of doom
Shall thrill through and waken me
Out of my stirless sleep.

“For a king that has been a king,
That has loved the people he swayed,
Has bound not his brows in vain
With the gold and the jewelled braid ;
Has held not in his right hand
The symbol that rules the land,
The sceptre of God for nought.
He may not escape the thing
He compassed : in death again
His sleep is troubled and weighed
By wraiths of the deeds he wrought.

“And if he has evil done,
There may he lie and rest
Under the storied stone,
Slumber, uneasy, opprest
By the ghosts of his evil deeds,
Till Death with his pallid steeds
Have smitten the world with doom :
And the moon and the stars and the sun
Will leave him to sleep alone,
Fearing to shine on him, lest
The wicked arise from the tomb !

“But if the ruler be wise,
Have wrought for his people's good
Sadly and like a god ;
Whenever the plague-mists brood
Over the kingless land,
When fire and famine and brand
Are loose and the people weep,
They cry to the king to rise ;
And under the down-pressed sod,
He hears their pitiful cries
And stirs in his dreamful sleep.

“And the sun and the stars and the moon
Look down through the creviced tomb
And rend with their arrows of light
The sepulchre's friendly gloom,
Stirring the life again
In pulse and muscle and vein ;
And the winds, that murmur and sweep
Over his resting-place, croon
And wail in his ear : ‘The night
Is past and the day is come ;
O king, arise from thy sleep !’

“The sleeper murmurs and sighs,—
Rest is so short and sweet,
Life is so long and sad,—
And he throws off his winding-sheet :
The gates of the tomb unclose
And out in the world he goes,
Weary and careful, to reap
The harvest, or hero-wise
To garner the good, and the bad
To burn, ere the Ruler shall mete
Him yet a portion of sleep.

THE KING'S SLEEP

“Great is the Master of Life
And I bow my head to His will !
When He needs me, the Lord will call
And I shall arise and fill
The span of duty once more.
But now I am weary and sore
With travail and need of sleep ;
And I fear lest the clangour and strife
Upon me again should fall,
Ere sleep shall have healed my ill.
I pray you, bury me deep !”

So the good king was dead,
And the people wrought him a grave
Deep in the mountain's womb,
In a place where the night-winds rave
And the centuries come and go,
Unheard of the dead below ;
Where never a ray might creep ;
In the rocks where the rubies red
And the diamonds grow in the gloom,
They hollowed the king a tomb,
Low and vaulted and deep.

And there they brought him to lie :
With wailing and many a tear,
The people bore to the place
The good king's corpse on the bier.
They perfumed his funeral glooms
With lily and amaranth blooms,
In a silence sweet and deep ;
They piled up the rocks on high
And there, with a smile on his face,
In doubt and sadness and fear,
They left the monarch to sleep.

Onward the centuries rolled
And the king slept safely and sound
In the heart of the faithful earth,
In the still death-slumbers bound :
And the sun and the moon and the stars
Looked wistfully down on the bars
Of the sepulchre quiet and deep,
Where he lay, while the world grew old
And death succeeded to birth,
And heard not an earthly sound
And saw not a sight in his sleep.

And it came to pass that the Wind
Spake once, and said to the Sun :
“Oh giver of summer-life !
Is not the time fordone
And the measure of God fulfilled,
Wherein He, the Lord, hath willed
The king should arise from sleep ?
I go in the night, and I find
The folk are weary of strife,
And joyless is every one
And many an eye doth weep !”

But the Sun said, shaking his hair,
His glorious tresses of gold :
“Brother, the grave is deep ;
And the rocks so closely do fold
The king, that we may not win
A place where to enter in
And trouble his slumber deep.
And the Wind said : “Where I fare,
The rays of the Sun can creep,
Through the thin worm-holes in the mould,
And rouse the king from his sleep !”

THE KING'S SLEEP

The Moon and the Stars and the Sun
Arose and shone on the grave,
And it was as the Wind had said :
Yea, up from the vaulted cave
The worms had crept in the night
And opened a way for the light
And the winds of the air to creep.
And they entered, one by one ;
Yea, down to the house of the dead,
Through cranny and rock they clave,
To wake the king from his sleep.

And the king turned round in his dream,
As he felt the terrible rays
Creeping down through the mould
In the track of the false worms' ways ;
And he quaked as the light drew near
And he called to the earth for fear,
To aid him his rest to keep ;
For the time he had slept did seem
But an hour, nor the wheels of gold
Had circled the span of days
When he should arise from sleep.

But the mother all faithful heard
The dreaming call of the king,
And she seized on the wandering rays
And of each one she made a thing
Of jewelries, such as grow
In the dim earth-caves below,
From the light kept long and deep ;
For she loved the man and she feared
Lest the fateful glitter and blaze
Of the light too early should bring
The dead from his goodly sleep.

She moulded pearls of the moon
And diamonds of the sun ;
Rubies and sapphires she made
Of the star-rays, every one.
There was never an one might 'scape
Some luminous jewel-shape
Of all the rays that did creep
Down through the earth, too soon
To rend the sepulchre's shade ;
But she seized on them all, and none
Might trouble the dead man's sleep.

Then did she mould him a crown
Of silver and cymophane
And in it the gems she set,
For a sign that never again,
Till God should beckon to him,
On the silence quiet and dim
Of the sepulchre low and deep
Should the rays of the stars look down
To trouble his rest. And yet
The centuries wax and wane
And the king is still in his sleep.

From "Ballads and Romances."

THE DEAD MASTER ¹

A THRENODY

Quis desiderio sit pudor aut modus
Tam cari capitis?

WAST thou not with us, when the night departed,
O strong sweet singer that art ours no more !
Was not the harping thine that first gave o'er
The song of wailing, when the daybreak parted
And the glad heavens broke open, shore from shore,
Sun-crowned and iris-hearted ?

Didst thou not smite the strings to jubilation,
Hymning the grand sweet scope of the To-be ?
Did not our midnight dole and doubting flee
From thy glad strength and all our lamentation
Swell with thy song into an ecstasy
Of aspiration ?

No more we wept and wailed for Life's undoing,
Following the golden notes that brake from thee,
Riding star-crowned upon that sudden sea
Which from thy soul poured forth for our renewing
Oceans of hope and jubilance, that we
Drank of, ensuing.

¹ Walter Savage Landor.
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Didst thou not rend for us the gloom descending,
Scatter the veils of doubting from our sight,
Bring to our lives again the flower-delight,
Bird-songs and field-scents in thy verses blending?
Didst thou not save our spirits from the night
Stern and impending?

Lo! and the night has bound thee, O our master!
Lo! and the shadows gather round thy place!
Shall we then no more look upon thy face?
Surely the shades will fold to night the faster,
Surely Death's torches quicker replace
Life's lamp of alabaster.

Shall we then no more see thee, O our singer,
Passing the love of women to our souls?
Shall then our lives be darkened and our goals
Deep in the grey dim distance fade and linger,
Since that no more thy voice our steps controls,
No more thy finger

Points and is clear along the hills that darken,
Clear with the distant glimmer of the day?
Will then the cliff-walls never roll away,
That thy song's sweetness hide from us that hearken,
Us that are weary in Life's mazed way,
Weary of mists that starken?

Have we then heard thy singing for the last time
Shape us the glories of the olden days?
Have we a last time listened to the lays
Wherein thou scaledst the ancient heavens for pastime
And in the future's iridescent haze
Buildedst the past-time?

Can we forget thee, high sweet soul and faithful,
Homer and Pindar of our modern time,
Lord of our thought and leader of our rhyme,
Thou that didst clear the air that was so deathful,
Filled it anew with scents of rose and thyme,
Made it bird-breathful ?

Thou that for us wast some sublime Silenus,
Full to the lips of wise and lovely words,
Shaping to song the speech of flowers and birds,
Wast as a god on whose strength we might lean us,
And, our Apollo, piped to us thy herds
Songs of Camœnus !

What doth it irk us if we never saw thee,
Knew but thy presence as a god's afar,
Heard but thy song as music of a star ?
Were we not with thee, part in thee and of thee ?
Were not our souls akin to thine and are ?
Did we not love thee ?

With thee we lived in some enchanted Arden,
Glad with the echo of the wood-nymphs' feet,
Bright with old memories, very strange and sweet,
That in the shade of that Armida's garden
Did from our cold pale daylight hide and fleet,
Where all things harden.

Thou wast no wailer, no sweet-voiced unmanner,
That for weak men within an idle clime
Buildd vain dreams to sweet and idle rhyme :
Thou hast built souls after the antique manner,
Souls that shall march through many a lapse of time,
Bearing thy banner,

Thy standard with its burden high and golden,
Daring to love and loving, know no shame,
Wit to reject the let of age-old blame,
Faith to rekindle altar-ashes olden,
Fan the old love of Nature to full flame,
Long un beholden.

Friend, we have mourned and longed for thee with
mourning ;
Poet, our ears are sad with listening,
Straining for songs no breeze shall ever bring ;
Master, thy lapse has dulled with dusk Life's morning,
Dimmed with black death each bright and lovely thing,
That in the adorning

Of thy high verse had erst been wont to sparkle,
Glitter and glow with glories of the past ;
Spirit of song and flame of faith, the blast
Of thine eclipse has reft from us, anarchal,
Robbed us with thee of all the things thou wast,
Bard patriarchal !

Master, in vain we listen for thy singing,
Listen and long and languish for desire !
Unto our ears no echoes of thy lyre
Pulse from the darkness, no glad breeze comes bringing
Voices, no sparkles of the ancient fire
Reach us, wide-winged.

Will then thy song no more translate our yearning,
Mould our harsh cries to music of the spheres ?
Will thy verse glitter no more with our tears ?
Has then the sun of thy bright soul, whose burning
Lightened so oft the midnight of our fears,
Set, unreturning ?

Or hast thou found thy dream in plains supernal,
Shapes of fair women, forms of noble men,
That, at the magic summons of thy pen,
Did, from the snows and solitudes hybernal,
Where they so long had slept, seek out again
The meadows vernal?

Do the long lapses of the ghost-land, lying
Stretched out beyond the portals of the grave,
Teem with fresh fruits and flowers for thee and wave
With the clear shapes of thine old dreams undying?
Has the dark flood been powerful to lave
From thy soul sighing,

Grief and the very memory of grieving,
Hope and the very thought of wearying
After the glow and glory thou didst sing?
Hast in the air such unimagined giving,
Splendour and flush of every godlike thing,
Wherefor thy living

Struggled and wearied in the bitter days?
Dost thou live out thy phantasies of gold
Under Greek skies and Attic woods of old,
Walk, crowned with myrtle, in the Dorian ways,
Peopled with all the dreams that did unfold
In thy high lays?

Surely, this thing alone could hold thee speechless,
Surely, in this alone couldst thou forget
Us that are left to struggle in the net
Of the sad world, to feel the days grow each less
Sweet to our souls, to weary with the fret,
Dumb and beseechless.

Surely, thy soul would yearn to us with longing :
Surely, no grave could keep thy voice from us,
Were not this so. The silence dolorous
Surely is voiceful of the years prolonging
Long bliss for thee and us to come, that thus
Unto the thronging,

Unto the cry and clamour of our yearning,
Still is the air and stirless is the light,
That from the grey grim bosom of the night
Comes back no sign or voice of thy returning,
Echoes no memory of the old delight,
Weariness spurning !

Well, be it so ; mayhap, some day, unknowing,
We too shall rest and come to where thou art,
Press thee again full-raptured to our heart,
Gaze in thine eyes with eyes no less fire-glowing
And in like bliss forget the olden smart,
The weary going

Friendless and dumb about the ways of being,
Cast off the memory of the years we sighed
After thy song and presence sunny-eyed,
In the new splendour of thy lays, the seeing
All the old hopes fulfilled and sanctified,
No longer fleeing

Mirage-like from us through the earthly hazes ;
Haply we too shall leave our olden pains
Off with our life and all its weary stains,
Put on like joy amid the light that blazes
There, the glad day that floods those golden plains,
Those songful mazes !

Till then, farewell ! The joy shall be the greater
When we clasp hands and hearts to part no more :
For that the long lone life has been so sore,
For that no sign of thee to death played traitor,
Sharper shall be the bliss for us in store,
Sweeter if later.

From "Songs of Life and Death."

A FUNERAL SONG FOR THÉOPHILE
GAUTIER

WHAT shall our song be for the mighty dead,
For this our master that is ours no more ?
Lo ! for the dead was none of those that wore
The laurel lightly on a heedless head,
Chanting a song of idle lustihead
Among the sun-kissed roses on the shore :
This our belovéd, that is gone before,
Was of the race of heroes battle-bred
That, from the dawn-white to the sunset-red,
Fought in the front of war.

Lo ! this was he that in the weary time,
In many a devious and darkling way,
Through dusk or doubt and thunder of dismay,
Held our hearts hopeful with his resonant rhyme,
Lifting our lives above the smoke and slime
Into some splendid summer far away,
Where the sun brimmed the chalice of the day
With gold of heaven and the accordant chime
Of woods and waters to the calm sublime
Carolled in roundelay.

This was our poet in the front of faith ;
Our singer gone to his most sweet repose,
Sped to his summer from our time of snows
And winter winding all the world with death.

Who shall make moan or utter mournful breath
 That this our noblest one no longer knows
 Our evil place of toil and many woes,
 Lying at the last where no voice entereth?
 Who shall weave for him other than a wreath
 Of laurel and of rose?

Hence with the cypress and the funeral song!
 Let not the shrill sound of our mourning mar
 His triumph that upon the Immortals' car
 Passes, star-crowned; but from the laurelled throng,
 That stands await, let every voice prolong
 A noise of jubilation that from afar
 Shall hail in heaven the new majestic star
 That rises with a radiance calm and strong,
 To burn for ever unobscured among
 The courts where the gods are.

Ay, let the hautboys and the clarions blow,
 The air rain roses and the sky resound
 With harpings of his peers that stand around,
 What while the splendours of the triumph go
 Along the streets and through the portico.
 I, too, who loved the dead, as from the ground
 The glow-worm loves the star, will stand, browbound
 With winter roses, in the sunset-glow,
 And make thin music, fluting soft and low
 Above his funeral mound.

I, too, who loved him, from beyond the sea,
 Add my weak note to that sublime acclaim
 That, soaring with the silver of his name,
 Shall shake the heavens with splendid harmony,

Till all who listen bend in awe the knee,
 Seeing a giant's spirit, like a flame,
 Remounting to that heaven from which it came,
And many weep for very shame to see
The majesty they knew not till 'twas free
 From earthly praise or blame.

Hail, O our master ! From the hastening hours
 This one we set above its grey-veiled peers,
 Armed with thy name against the night that nears.
We crown it with the glory of the flowers,
We wind it with all magic that is ours
 Of song and hope and jewel-coloured tears ;
 We charm it with our love from taint of fears ;
We set it high against the sky that lowers,
To burn, a love-sign, from the topmost towers,
 Through glad and sorry years.

From "Songs of Life and Death."

PRELUDE TO HAFIZ

HITHER, hither, O ye weary, O ye sons of wail and woe,
Ye, who've proved the hollow shimmer of this world of
fleeting show,
Ye, who've seen your hearts' hopes vanish, like the first-
lings of the snow ;

Ye, who scorn the brutal bondage of this world of
misbelief,
Ye, who bear the royal blazon of the heart afire with
grief,
Hearken, hearken to my calling ; for I proffer you relief.

I am he whom men call teller of the things that none
may see,
Tongue of speech of the Unspoken, I am he that holds
the key
Of the treasuries of vision and the mines of mystery.

I am he that knows the secrets of the lands beyond the
goal,
I am he that solves the puzzles of the sorrow-smitten soul,
I am he that giveth gladness from the wine-enlightened
bowl ;

I am he that heals the wounded and the weary of their
scars,
I am Hafiz, son of Shiraz, in the pleasant land of Fars,
Where I flung my flouting verses in the faces of the stars.

See, my hands are full of jewels from the worlds beyond
the tomb :

Here be pearls of perfect passion from the middle dream-
land's womb ;

Here be amethysts of solace, for the purging of your
gloom :

Here be rubies red and radiant, of the colour of the
heart,

Here be topazes sun-golden, such as rend the dusk
apart,

Here be sapphires steeped in heaven, for the salving of
your smart.

If your souls are sick with sorrow, here is that which
shall appease ;

If your lips are pale with passion, here is that which
hath the keys

To the sanctuaries of solace and the halidomes of ease.

Let the bigot tend his idols, let the trader buy and
sell ;

Ears are theirs that cannot hearken to the tale I have
to tell,

Eyes that cannot see the treasures which are open to
my spell.

Where is he that's heavy-laden? Lo, {my hand shall
give him peace.

Where are they that dwell in darkness? I am he that
can release.

Where is he that's world-bewildered? I will give his
cares surcease.

Hither, hither with your burdens! I have that shall
make them light.

I have salves shall purge the earth-mists from the
fountains of your sight;

I have spells shall raise the morning in the midst of
your night.

Come, O doubt-distracted brother! Come, O heavy-
burthened one!

Come to me and I will teach you how the goal of rest
is won;

Come, and I will cleave your darkness with the splendours
of the sun.

Leave your striving never-ending; let the weary world
go by;

Let its bondmen hug their fetters, let its traders sell and
buy;

With the roses in the garden we will sojourn, you and I.

Since the gladness and the sadness of the world alike are
nought,

I will give you wine to drink of from the ancient wells
of thought,

Where it's lain for ages ripening, whilst the traders sold
and bought.

What is heaven, that we should seek it? Wherefore
question How or Why?

See, the roses are in blossom; see, the sun is in the sky;

See, the land is lit with summer; let us live before we
die.

From "Songs of Life and Death."

EPILOGUE

TO THE BOOK OF THE THOUSAND NIGHTS
AND ONE NIGHT

TWELVE years this day,—a day of winter, dreary
With drifting snows, when all the world seemed dead
To spring and hope,—it is since, worn and weary
Of doubt within and strife without, I fled

From the mean workday miseries of existence,
From spites that slander and from hates that lie,
Into the dreamland of the Orient distance,
Under the splendours of the Syrian sky.

And in the enchanted realms of Eastern story,
Far from the lovelessness of modern times,
Garnered the rainbow-remnants of old glory
That linger yet in those ancestral climes.

And now, the long task done, the journey over,
From that far home of immemorial calms,
Where, as a mirage, on the sky-marge hover
The desert and its oases of palms.

Lingering, I turn me back, with eyes reverted,
To this stepmother world of daily life,
As one by some long pleasant dream deserted,
That wakes anew to dull unlovely strife.

Yet, if none other weal the quest have brought me,
The long belovèd labour now at end,
This gift of gifts the untravelled East hath brought me,
The knowledge of a new and valued friend.

February 5, 1889.

From "Songs of Life and Death."

THE BALLAD OF ISOBEL

I

THE day is dead, the night draws on,
The shadows gather fast :
'Tis many an hour yet to the dawn,
Till Hallow-tide be past.

Till Hallow-tide be past and sped,
The night is full of fear ;
For then, they say, the restless dead
Unto the live draw near.

Between the Saints' day and the Souls'
The dead wake in the mould ;
The poor dead, in their grassy knolls
They lie and are a-cold.

They think upon the live that sit
And drink the Hallow-ale,
Whilst they lie stark within the pit,
Nailed down with many a nail.

And sore they wonder if the thought
Live in them of the dead ;
And sore with wish they are distraught
To feel the firelight red.

THE BALLAD OF ISOBEL

Betwixt the day and yet the day
The Saints and Souls divide,
The dead folk rise out of the clay
And wander far and wide.

They wander o'er the sheeted snow,
Chill with the frore of death,
Until they see the windows glow
With the fire's ruddy breath.

And if the cottage door be fast
And but the light win out,
All night, until their hour is past,
The dead walk thereabout.

And all night long, the live folk hear
Their windy song of sighs
And waken all for very fear,
Until the white day rise.

But if the folk be piteous
And pity the poor dead
That weary in the narrow house
Upon the cold earth's bed,

They pile the peats upon the fire
And leave the door ajar,
That so the rosy flame aspire
To where the grey ghosts are.

And syne they sweep the cottage floor
And set the hearthside chair :
The sad sprites watch beside the door
Till midnight still the air.

And then toward the friendly glow
Come trooping in the dead ;
Until the cocks for morning crow,
They sit by the fire red.

II

“ Oh, I have wearied long enough !
I'll weary me no more ;
But I will watch for my dead love
Till Hallow-tide be o'er.”

He set the door across the sill ;
The moonlight fluttered in ;
The sad snow covered heath and hill,
As far as eye could win.

The thin frost feathered in the air ;
All dumb the white world lay ;
Night sat on it as cold and fair
As death upon a may.

He turned him back into the room
And sat him by the fire :
Night darkened round him in the gloom ;
The shadowtide rose higher.

He rose and looked out o'er the hill
To where the grey kirk lay ;
The midnight quiet was so still,
He heard the bell-chimes play.

Twelve times he heard the sweet bell chime ;
No whit he stirred or spoke ;
But his eyes fixed, as if on Time
The hour of judgment broke.

And as the last stroke fell and died,
Over the kirkyard grey
Himseemed he saw a blue flame glide,
Among the graves at play.

A flutter waved upon the breeze,
As of a spirit's wings :
A wind went by him through the trees,
That spoke of heavenly things.

Himseemed he heard a sound of feet
Upon the silver snow :
A rush of robes by him did fleet,
A sighing soft and low.

He turned and sat him down again ;
The midnight filled the place :
The tears ran down like silent rain
Upon his weary face.

“She will not come to me,” he said ;
“The death-swoon is too strong :
She hath forgot me with the dead,
Me that she loved so long.

“She will not come : she sleeps too sweet
Within the quiet ground.
What worth is love, when life is fleet
And sleep in death so sound ?

“She will not come !”—A soft cold air
Upon his forehead fell :
He turned him to the empty chair ;
And there sat Isobel.

His dead love sat him side by side,
His minnie white and wan :
Within the tomb she could not hide,
Whilst he sat weeping on.

Ah, wasted, wasted was her face,
And sore her cheek was white ;
But in her eyes the ancient grace
Burnt with a feeble light.

Upon her breast the grave-wede grey
Fell to her little feet ;
But still the golden tresses lay
About her bosom sweet.

“ Ah, how is't with ye, Isobel ?
How pale ye look, and cold !
Ah, sore it is to think ye dwell
Alone beneath the mould !

“ Is't weary for our love ye've grown
From dwelling with the dead,
Or shivering from the cold grave-stone
To find the firelight red ? ”

“ Oh, 'tis not that I'm lorn of love
Or that a-cold I lie :
I trust in God that is above
To bring you by-and-by.

“I feel your kisses on my face,
Your kisses sweet and warm :
Your love is in the burial-place ;
I feel nor cold nor worm.

“I feel the love within your heart
That beats for me alone :
I fear not change upon your part
Nor crave for the unknown.

“For to the dead no faint fears cling :
All certainty have they :
They know (and smile at sorrowing)
Love never dies away.

“No harm can reach me in Death’s deep :
It hath no fear for me :
God sweetens it to lie and sleep,
Until his face I see :

“He makes it sweet to lie and wait,
Till we together meet
And hand-in-hand athwart the gate
Pass up the golden street.

“But where’s the babe that at my side
Slept sweetly long ago ?
So sore to me to-night it cried,
I could not choose but go.

“I heard its voice so full of wail,
It woke me in the grave :
Its sighs came to me on the gale,
Across the wintry wave.

“For though death lap her wide and mild,
A mother cannot rest,
Except her little sucking child
Be sleeping at her breast.”

“Ah, know'st thou not, my love?” he said :
“Methought the dead knew all,
When in that night of doom and dread
The moving waters' wall

“Smote on our ship and drove it down
Beneath the raging sea,
All of our company did drown,
Alas ! save only me.

“And me the cruel billows cast
Asworn upon the strand ;
Thou dead within mine arms held fast,
Hand locked in other's hand.

“The ocean never to this day
Gave up our baby dead :
Ah, woe is me that life should stay
When all its sweet is fled !”

“Go down,” said she, “to the seashore :
God taketh ruth on thee :
Search well ; and I will come once more
Ere yet the midnight be.”

She bent her sweet pale mouth to his :
The snowdrift from the sky
Falls not so cold as did that kiss :
He shook as he should die.

THE BALLAD OF ISOBEL

She looked on him with yearning eyes
And vanished from his sight :
He heard the matin cock crow thrice ;
The morning glimmered white.

Then from his place he rose and sought
The shore beside the sea :
And there all day he searched ; but nought
Until the eve found he.

At last a pale star glittered through
The growing dusk of night
And fell upon the waste of blue,
A trembling wand of light.

And lo ! a wondrous thing befell :
As though the small star's ray
Availed to break some year-old spell
That on the water lay,

A white form rose out of the deep,
Where it so long had lain,
Cradled within the cold death-sleep :
He knew his babe again.

It floated softly to his feet ;
White as a flower it lay :
Christ's love had kept its body sweet
Unravished of decay.

He thanked God weeping for His grace ;
And many a tear he shed
And many a kiss upon its face
That smiled as do the dead.

Then to the kirkyard where the maid
Slept cold in clay he hied ;
And with a loving hand he laid
The baby by her side.

III

The dark fell down upon the earth ;
Night held the quiet air :
He sat before the glowing hearth,
Beside the empty chair.

Twelve times at last for middle night
Rang out the kirkyard bell :
Ere yet the twelfth was silent quite,
By him sat Isobel.

Within her arms their little child
Lay pillowed on her breast :
Death seemed to it as soft and mild
As heaven to the blest.

Ah, no more wasted was her face,
Nor white her cheek and wan !
The splendour of a heavenly grace
Upon her forehead shone.

She seemed again the golden girl
Of the long-vanished years :
Her face shone as a great sweet pearl,
Washed and made white in tears.

The light of heaven filled her eyes
With soft and splendid flame ;
Out of the heart of Paradise
It seemed as if she came.

He looked upon her beauty bright ;
And sore, sore sorrowed he,
To think how many a day and night
Between them yet must be.

He looked at her with many a sigh ;
For sick he was with pain,
To think how many a year must fly
Ere they two met again.

She looked on him : no sadness lay
Upon her tender mouth ;
And syne she smiled, a smile as gay
And glad as in her youth.

“Be of good cheer, dear heart,” said she :
“Yet but a little year
Ere thou and I together see
The end of doubt and fear.

“Come once again the saints’ night ring
Unto the spirits’ feet,
Glad with the end of sorrowing,
Once more we three shall meet ;

“We three shall meet no more to part
For all eternity :
'Gin I come not to thee, sweetheart,
Do thou come then to me.”

IV

Another year is past and gone :
Once more the lingering light
Fades from the sky and dusk falls down
Upon the Holy Night.

The hearth is clear ; the fire burns red ;
The door stands open wide :
He waits for the beloved dead
To come with Hallow-tide.

The midnight rings out loud and slow
Across the frosty air :
He sits before the firelight-glow,
Beside the waiting chair.

The last chime dies into the night :
The stillness grows apace :
And yet there comes no lady bright
To fill the empty place.

No soft hand falls upon his hair ;
No light breath fans his brow :
The night is empty everywhere ;
The birds sleep on the bough.

“ Ah woe to me ! the night fades fast ;
Her promise is forgot :
Alas ! ” he said, “ the hours fly past,
And still she cometh not !

THE BALLAD OF ISOBEL

“So sweet she sleeps and sleeps with her
The baby at her breast,
No thought of earthly love can stir
Their undesireful rest.

“Ah, who can tell but Time may lay
Betwixt us such a space
That haply at the Judgment Day
She will forget my face.”

The still night quivered as he spoke ;
He felt the midnight air
Throb and a little breeze awoke
Across the heather bare.

And in the wind himseemed he heard
His true love's voice once more :
Afar it came, and but one word,
“Come !” unto him it bore.

A faint hope flickered in his breast :
He rose and took his way
Where underneath the brown hill's crest
The quiet kirkyard lay.

He pushed the lychgate to the wall :
Against the moonless sky
The grey kirk towered dusk and tall :
Heaven seemed on it to lie.

Dead darkness held the holy ground ;
His feet went in and out
And stumbled at each grassy mound,
As one that is in doubt.

Then suddenly the sky grew white ;
The moon thrust through the gloom :
The tall tower's shade against her light
Fell on his minnie's tomb.

Full on her grave its shadow fell,
As 'twere a giant's hand,
That motionless the way doth tell
Unto the heavenly land.

He fell upon his knees thereby
And kissed the holy earth,
Wherein the only twain did lie
That made life living-worth.

He knelt ; no longer did he weep ;
Great peace was on his soul :
Sleep sank on him, a wondrous sleep,
Assaining death and dole.

And in the sleep himseemed he stood
Before a high gold door,
Upon whose midst the blessèd Rood
Burnt like an opal's core.

Christ shining on the cross to see
Was there for all device :
Within he saw the almond-tree
That grows in Paradise.

He knew the fallen almond-flowers
That drop without the gate,
So with their scent the tardy hours
Be cheered for those that wait.

And as he looked, a glimmering light
Shone through the blazoned bars :
The wide tall gate grew blue and bright
As heaven with the stars.

A postern opened in his face ;
Sweet savours breathed about ;
And through the little open space
A fair white hand came out :

A hand as white as ermolin,
A hand he knew full well,
Beckoned to him to enter in—
The hand of Isobel.

Lord Christ, Thy morning tarrieth long :
The shadows come and go :
These three have heard the angels' song ;
Still many wait below.

These three on heaven's honey feed
And milk of Paradise :
How long before for us indeed
The hills of heaven rise ?

How long before, joined hand-in-hand
With all the dear-loved dead,
We pass along the heavenly land
And hear the angels' tread ?

The night is long : the way is drear :
Our hearts faint for the light :
Vouchsafe, dear Lord, the day draw near,
The morning of Thy sight !

From "Ballads and Romances."

BARCAROLLE

OUT sails to the fresh breeze !
My heart
Pines for the open seas.
The soft moon flowers, like a dream-delight,
Over the full tide-flow.
Shake out the sails ! Sweetheart, we will depart,
We will depart and sail the seas to-night,
Whilst on the foam that flees
The blithe breeze flutters and the weed floats slow,
The moon above us and the tide below.

Where shall we steer to-night ?
The moon
Lies like a lane of white,
Far out beyond our vision in the West,
Over the dreaming sea,
As if some goddess walked with silver shoon
Over the dimples of each white-winged crest.
Sweetheart, the way is bright :
Shall we trim sails and follow it till we
Win to some shimmering world of fantasy ?

Folk hold we chase a dream :
They say
That the bright worlds, which beam
Beyond the setting and the dying day,

Are shows begotten of the air and light,
 Delusions distance-woven for the sight,
 Mere mirages, that seem
 And flee before us with unceasing flight :
 We lose our lives, they tell us, following
 A vain, unreal thing.

'Twere better far to bide
 On shore,
 To delve the round earth's side
 For diamonds and golden glittering store
 And in the strife for wealth and worldly praise
 Join, heaping up the treasure of the days
 With great and goodly store
 Of what men follow in the mortal ways ;
 Since, as they say, these only real are
 And all things else unreal as a star.

What matter what they say ?
 We *know*
 That which on dullards' way
 They prate but of, as idiots do, who go,
 Strange spells and magic words without comprise
 Reciting, which, if spoken wizard-wise,
 Would overthrow
 The world and rend with ruin earth and skies :
 We soar, whilst here below they herd like sheep ;
 We waken, whilst they sleep.

For them, dull life once o'er,
 They lie
 And rot for evermore ;
 There is no part of them but all must die,

Since all their thoughts are earthy as their dust,
Their spirits as their bodies rust in rust ;
No hope have they, on high
To raise them, but for ever perish must :
What shall avail to lift them from the grave
Of all that here they crave ?

With them what shall they bear
Away,
Into the nether air,
Of all the goods they garner night and day ?
Shall they regild death's darkness with their gold ?
Shall their wealth warm them in the utter cold ?
Their honour cleave the clay ?
Will the worm do them worship in the mould ?
Nay, earth to earth and dust to dust must back ;
With life all else must lack.

But we, whose kingdom is not of the earth,
Whose weal
No world of death and birth
Might work nor fill the yearnings that we feel,
Our visions overlasting life and death,
Our dreams that cease not with the 'scape of breath,
From us death cannot steal
The splendour and the fulness of our faith ;
We bear with us into the realms of Night
The seeds of life and light.

Not of the dust our hope,
Our thought,
That soars beyond earth's scope.
If here it gain the glories not it sought,

Itself its warrant is that such things are,
That the bright visions, here from us afar
Which flee, are not for nought ;
Nay, though it be beyond the topmost star,
Our dreams, that seem delusions, simple sooth
Are in the air of truth.

Since here our each desire,
Fulfilled,
Becomes a wasting fire,
A mocking counterfeit of what we willed,
Thrice happy they who chase some Golden Fleece,
Beyond man's wit, who seek without surcease
Some vision that they build,
Some lovely land of everlasting peace,
Who, after some divinest dream, o'erstray
The strands of night and day !

Come, then, launch out with me
And steer
Into the shoreless sea !
Shake out the sails and follow without fear
Into the distance and the golden West !
We yet shall sight the Islands of the Blest ;
We yet the Hesperian Gardens of our quest
Shall compass, if not here,
In this our world of ravin and unrest,
Then in those lands of a serener air
Where truth alone is fair.

From "Songs of Life and Death."

RONDEAU REDOUBLÉ

My day and night are in my lady's hand ;
I have none other sunrise than her sight :
For me her favour glorifies the land,
Her anger darkens all the cheerful light.
Her face is fairer than the hawthorn white,
When all a-flower in May the hedge-rows stand :
Whilst she is kind, I know of none affright :
My day and night are in my lady's hand.

All heaven in her glorious eyes is spanned :
Her smile is softer than the summer night,
Gladder than daybreak on the Faery strand :
I have none other sunrise than her sight.
Her silver speech is like the singing flight
Of runnels rippling o'er the jewelled sand ;
Her kiss a dream of delicate delight ;
For me her favour glorifies the land.

What if the winter slay the summer bland !
The gold sun in her hair burns ever bright :
If she be sad, straightway all joy is banned :
Her anger darkens all the cheerful light.
Come weal or woe, I am my lady's knight
And in her service every ill withstand :
Love is my lord, in all the world's despite,
And holdeth in the hollow of his hand
My day and night.

From "Exotica."

ROCOCO

STRAIGHT and swift the swallows fly
To the sojourn of the sun ;
All the golden year is done,
All the flower-time flitted by ;
Through the boughs the witch-winds sigh :
But heart's summer is begun ;
Life and Love at last are one.
Love-lights glitter in the sky.
Summer days were soon outrun,
With the setting of the sun ;
Love's delight is never done.
Let the turn-coat roses die ;
We are lovers, Love and I :
In Love's lips my roses lie.

A BIRTHDAY SONG

WHAT shall I say to my dearest dear,
On the sweetest day of the whole sweet year ?
Shall I tell her how dainty she is and sweet,
From her golden head to her silver feet ?
Love of my loves, shall I say to her—
Till the breeze catch tune and the birds repeat
The chime of my song—thou art bright and rare,
(Eyes of the grey and amber hair)
Who is so white as my love, my sweet ?
Who is so sweet and fair ?

Ah, no ! for my song would faint and die,
Faint with a moan and a happy sigh,
For a kiss of her lips so clear and red,
For a touch of her dainty gold-wrought head
And a look of her tender eye !
And even the words, if words there were said,
Would fail for the sound of her lovely name,
Till the very birds should flout them to shame,
That they strove to render silver with lead,
To image with snow the flame !

So e'en I must sing her over again
The old old song with its one refrain,
The song that in spring like the cooing dove
Has nothing for burden but just "I love."

Go, O my songs, like a silver rain,
 And flutter her golden head above ;
 Sing in her walks and her happy day,
 Fill all her dreams with the roundelay,
 "I love" and "I love her," again and again,
 "I love her," sorry or gay !

Is she thinking of me, my lady of love ?
 (Heart of my heart, is the day enough
 For the thought and the wish of her daintiness
 And the memory of the last caress ?)
 Do her lips seek mine, my gold-plumaged dove—
 My little lady with glass-grey eyne—
 In long sweet dreams of the night to press
 From the grapes of delight Love's golden wine ?
 Does thought seem more and the world seem less,
 As her hand strays, seeking mine ?

Fly to her, fly, O my little song !
 (Fly to her quickly ; the way is long
 And your little dove-coloured wings are weak.)
 Nestle your head on her roseleaf cheek ;
 Say what I would, if *my* wings were strong
 And the heaven were near to seek :
 Take all the tender fancies that lie
 And flower in my heart so silently ;
 Sing her the love I can never speak
 Wholly, but in a sigh !

From "Songs of Life and Death."

VILLANELLE

THE air is white with snow-flakes clinging ;
Between the gusts that come and go
Methinks I hear the woodlark singing.

Methinks I see the primrose springing
On many a bank and hedge, although
The air is white with snow-flakes clinging.

Surely the hands of Spring are flinging
Wood-scents to all the winds that blow :
Methinks I hear the woodlark singing.

Methinks I see the swallow winging
Across the woodlands sad with snow ;
The air is white with snow-flakes clinging.

Was that the cuckoo's wood-chime swinging ?
Was that the linnet fluting low ?
Methinks I hear the woodlark singing.

Or can it be the breeze is bringing
The breath of violets ? Ah no !
The air is white with snow-flakes clinging.

VILLANELLE

It is my lady's voice that's stringing
Its beads of gold to song ; and so
Methinks I hear the woodlark singing.

The violets I see upspringing
Are in my lady's eyes, I trow :
The air is white with snow-flakes clinging.

Dear, whilst thy tender tones are ringing,
E'en though amidst the winter's woe
The air is white with snow-flakes clinging,
Methinks I hear the woodlark singing.

From "Exotica."

RONDEAU

LIFE lapses by for you and me,
Our sweet days pass us by and flee
And evermore death draws us nigh :
The blue fades fast out of your sky,
The ripple ceases from our sea.
What would we not give, you and I,
The early sweet of life to buy ?
Alas ! sweetheart, that cannot be ;
 Life lapses by.

Yet, though our young years buried lie,
Shall love with spring and summer die ?
What if the roses faded be ?
We in each other's eyes will see
New springs nor questions how or why
 Life lapses by.

From "Exotica."

RONDEAU

ONE of these days, my lady whispereth,
A day made beautiful with summer's breath,
Our feet shall cease from these divided ways,
Our lives shall leave the distance and the haze
And flower together in a mingling wreath.
No pain shall part us then, no grief amaze,
No doubt dissolve the glory of our gaze ;
Earth shall be heaven for us twain, she saith,
 One of these days.

Ah love, my love ! Athwart how many Mays
The old hope lures us with its long delays !
How many winters waste our fainting faith !
I wonder, will it come this side of death,
With any of the old sun in its rays,
 One of these days ?

From "Exotica."

BASSARID'S HORN

FROM "THE BOOK OF HERCULES"

YOUNG, fair land,
Robe thyself with flowers ; arise and shine !
Spring, that holdst the summer in the hollow of thy
hand,
Come, for the sweetness of the year is thine.

Amethyst sea,
Blossom and bird-song have burst their winter's graves :
See, in the distance the month of storms doth flee :
Laugh with the lucent sapphire of thy waves.

Soul of man,
Shake off thy sadness, for the Spring is here.
Mark how the meadows have braved the winter's ban ;
Glow with the gladness of the newborn year.

From "Songs of Life and Death."

FROM "REQUIEM FOR OUR DEAD
IN SOUTH AFRICA"

Their bodies are buried in peace ;
but their name liveth for ever-
more.—ECCCLUS. xlv. 14.

HAPPY are our dead that on the veldt are sleeping,
Our dear-belovèd dead, that died for England's sake
They weary not, as we who watch and wake,
To follow, on the war-tide's ebb and flow,
The fluctuant fight against the faithless foe,
Nor hear the widows and the orphans weeping.
Upon their graves the shadows come and go ;
Their quiet sleep no battle-thunders break,
No shouts of jubilance, no wails of woe :
Their seed of sacrifice and duty shed
Upon the embattled field and with the red
Of their young hearts' blood watered, they lie low
And are content to sleep and wait the reaping :
They are at peace beneath the moonbeams creeping ;
They feel the sun-blaze not upon their head ;
They shiver not beneath the winter's snow.
They need no pity, all with them is well ;
O'er them the stars the eternal watch are keeping,
The reflux tides of heaven wane and swell ;
The reverent skies rain softly on their bed :
Far oversea, beyond the wild waves' leaping,
They rest in peace, our well-belovèd dead.

.

Happy are our dead, that in our hearts are living,
 Our holy dead, who died to hold us true and great !
 Whatever lie beyond the years in wait,
 Whatever webs the future may be weaving,
 Theirs shall the glory be, for theirs the giving.
 'Twas they that stemmed for us the storm of hate ;
 'Twas they that turned for us the tides of Fate :
 Ours was the wreck ; but theirs was the retrieving ;
 They gave us all and asked for no returning,
 Fought on nor looked to know the darkness burning
 With the bright signs of morning or to see
 The dayspring and the dawn of victory.
 Enough their faith for them and the believing
 That England never from her fair estate
 Should fail whilst yet her lion brood should be,
 Each breast a bulwark in her foremost gate,
 Strong with the strength of duty for the achieving
 Of the impossible by land and sea,
 Each one a little England, unafraid
 To face the world in arms, where England bade.
 Theirs is the triumph ; ours is the bereaving ;
 The trophy theirs ; ours but the broken blade,
 The bloodstained arms, for love and memory laid,
 Wet with our weeping, on the narrow bed
 Whereas our heroes sleep, of doubt and dread
 Absolved, of sorry thought and sad conceiving.
 So leave we them to rest ; but, in the leaving,
 Let not their perfect peace our mourning mar ;
 Let not our tears upon their triumph jar.
 They live and shall not die ! Whilst England stands
 Upon the Eastern and the Western strands,
 The light of virtue haloing her head,
 Crowned, from the morning to the evening-red,
 Queen of the Orient and the Austral lands,

The memory of their deeds shall never die :
Whilst "England liveth yet !" it shall be said,
Defying Time that maketh low and high,
This one downsetting still and that upheaving,
They shall live on with England. Far and nigh,
Their names shall shine as polestars in her sky,
Till she and all her memories are sped.
Leave them to rest ; there is no need of grieving.
Sleep on in peace, our unforgotten dead !

Jan. 1902.

From "Songs of Life and Death."

THE MARSH-KING'S DAUGHTER

I

A WIND came over the Western water,
(*Oh sweet is the rose in the fresh spring-time !*)
“Weary of life,” it said, “poor lover ?
Sick for a love that is dead and gone ?
(Winds blow over her, earth's above her.)
Sick for a day that was faded at dawn ?
The cure is the kiss of the marsh-king's daughter.”

Weary of life, I answered and said,
“O wind of the Western water !”
Sick for a day and a love that are dead,
“Why should I seek,” I answered and said,
“The kiss of the marsh-king's daughter ?”

II

The wind came over the Western water :
(*The death-flower blows in the summer's prime !*)
“If one be weary and sick of living,
Sick for the sake of a vanished love,
Sick of the glow and blossom of spring,
Sick of the summer's glitter and ring ;
If colour lack in the autumn's weaving,
And the winter hold not sorrow enough,
The cure is the kiss of the marsh-king's daughter.”

Weary of life, I answered and said,
 "O wind of the Western water!"
 Bitter with tears that I could not shed,
 "Tell me, West-wind," I answered and said,
 "The home of the marsh-king's daughter?"

III

"It lies far over the Western water,
(Oh sweet is the rose in the fresh spring-time!)
 Under the arch of the sun at setting,
 'Twi'xt gold of sunset and dusk of night,
 Under the sound of the sea-winds' fretting;
 In the purple heart of the marish mist,
 That the shafts of the dying day have kissed,
 Under the ceiling where stars are bright,
 There is the home of the marsh-king's daughter."

Weary of life, I answered and said,
 "O wind of the Western water!"
 My hopes lie close in the house of the dead;
 But I will go," I answered and said,
 "To seek for the marsh-king's daughter."

IV

I wandered over the Western water,
(Oh sweet is the rose in the fresh spring-time!)
 And I came in the evening, when light was dying,
 To a land where the hum of the world was still,
 Where the voice of the evening wind was sighing
 And the spells of sleep were over the air;
 And I saw in the setting the golden hair
 Of the sunset broider the mists, until
 They grew to the robe of the marsh-king's daughter.

Golden starlets were over her head,
 (A crown for the marsh-king's daughter.)
 "Come to my arms," I answered and said ;
 And she came, with the West-wind's murmurous
 tread,
 To me that so long had sought her.

v

A voice came over the Western water :
 (*The death-flower blows in the summer's prime !*)
 "Dearly," it said, "hast thou won and bought her.
 Her kisses are cold as are the dead
 And the gold of her hair o'er thee is shed,
 As wings of the birds that fly to the slaughter !
 The lips thou shouldst kiss are living and red,
 Thine eyes should feast on the joys of earth,
 Thy hands pluck flowers in the golden prime.
 Youth was not made for sorrow and dearth :
 Get thee back, whilst there yet is time ;
 For Death is the name of the marsh-king's
 daughter !"

Weary of life, I answered and said,
 "O wind of the Western water !
 My lips shall kiss but the lips of the dead."
 Sick of the day, I answered and said,
 "Kiss me, O marsh-king's daughter !"

From "Ballads and Romances."

THE WESTWARD SAILING

OH, blithe and glad the liege-folk were
In all the Norway strand !
For home the king a bride did bring,
The king of all the land.

With many a gay gold flag they decked
The city of the king ;
Loud sang the choirs and from the spires
The bells for joy did ring.

There was no man in all the land
But laid his grief aside,
What time the king with holy ring
Was wedded to his bride.

Within the royal banquet-hall
The bridal feast was spread ;
The cup went round with garlands crowned,
And eke the wine ran red.

The harpers smote the silver strings,
The gleemen all did sing
Thereto a song so sweet and strong,
That all the hall did ring.

And therein sat upon his throne,
Among his barons all,
The king, beside his troth-plight bride,
And ruled the festival.

He kissed his bride, his bride kissed him,
From the same cup drank they ;
And therewithal the minstrels all
Did sing a joyous lay.

Oh, merry, merry went the feast
And fast the red wine ran !
The gates gaped wide, and in did stride
An old seafaring man.

In russet leather was he clad,
As those that use the sea,
And, three times rolled, a chain of gold
About his neck had he.

Grey was his head, his beard was grey
And furrowed was his brow ;
But in his eye a might did lie
That made all heads to bow.

He gazed upon the crownèd king,
Upon his barons all ;
And there befell a sudden spell
Of silence in the hall.

With steel-grey eyes he gazed on them,
Whilst none the hush might break—
The words to come were stricken dumb—
And thus to them he spake :

“The lift is clear, the wind blows free
Toward the sunset land ;
Oh, who with me will sail the sea
Unto the Western strand ?

“Now let the courtier leave his feast
And plough the deep with me !
The king his bride let leave, to ride
Over the briny sea !

“Now let the baron leave his hall,
The minstrel leave his song !
For in the West is set the quest
Whereafter all men long.

“There are the forests thick with flower
And there the winds breathe balm
And there gold birds sing wonder-words
Under the summer calm.

“There is the earth thick-strewn with gems,
The sands are golden-shelled,
And in the skies the magic lies
That gives new youth to eld.

“Oh, who will sail the seas with me
Unto the shores of gold ?
There lieth rest, that is the best
For all men, young or old.”

Then up there leapt the crownèd king,
The king of all the land :
“Oh, I with thee will sail the sea
Unto the Western strand !

“Whate’er thou art, thy words have wrought
Such yearning in my breast,
That I will sail, come weal or bale,
Unto the golden West !”

His bride hath laid upon his arm
Her hand more white than snow ;
She kissed him thrice, with tearful eyes
And mouth all white for woe ;

And on his finger, for a sign
That he should ne’er forget,
A ring threefold of good red gold
And sapphires hath she set.

The seaman led them with his eye
Out of the high gold door ;
And they are come, for wonder dumb,
Down to the white sea-shore.

Before the city, on the sea,
A fair tall ship there lay,
With sails of silk as white as milk
And ropes of sea-green say.

Into the vessel tall and stout
He brought them every one ;
And as he bade, all sail they made
Toward the setting sun.

Oh, many a weary day they sailed
Across the silver spray !
And ever due the West wind blew,
But never land saw they :

A wild wide waste of emerald sea,
Flecked with the argent foam ;
A sun of gold that westward rolled
Over the blue sky-dome ;

The twilight grey, that ends the day,
And then the moon on high ;
The purple night, with moonlight white
And stars thick set in sky.

So fifty days were wellnigh past,
And on the fiftieth day,
At eventide, the sad wind sighed,
The sapphire lift grew grey.

The icebergs rose about the ship,
All in a death-white ring,
And grimly round with ice they bound
The vessel of the king.

The helmsman stood beside the helm ;
The flesh from off him fell ;
And in his stead there reared its head
A grisly Death from Hell.

The Death-King stood upon the deck,
High as the topmost mast,
And thrice among that pallid throng
He blew a deathly blast.

With the first breath the sky turned black,
The sun a red fire grew,
And ghastly pale, the hearts did fail
Of all that luckless crew.

A second time he breathed on them
Under the heavens' pall,
And with his breath the sleep of death
Fell down upon them all.

A third time with his mouth he blew—
His mouth without a lip—
And far below the chill tide-flow
Down sank the doom'd ship.

Deep in the bosom of the sea
The frozen Norsemen rest ;
Each mother's son the prize hath won
That for all men is best.

All in the trance of that strange sleep,
Upon the deck they stand ;
And Death the King, he hath the ring
Upon his bony hand.

From "Ballads and Romances."

FROM "CADENCES" MAJOR

OH, what shall be the burden of our rhyme
And what shall be our ditty when the blossom's on the lime?
Our lips have fed on winter and on weariness too long :
We will hail the royal summer with a golden-footed song!

O lady of my summer and my spring,
We shall hear the blackbird whistle and the brown sweet
throistle sing
And the low clear noise of waters running softly by our feet,
When the sights and sounds of summer in the green clear
fields are sweet.

We shall see the roses blowing in the green,
The pink-lipped roses kissing in the golden summer-sheen ;
We shall see the fields flower thick with stars and bells
of summer-gold
And the poppies burn out red and sweet across the
corn-crowned wold.

The time shall be for pleasure, not for pain ;
There shall come no ghost of grieving for the past be-
twixt us twain ;
But in the time of roses our lives shall grow together,
And our love be as the love of gods in the blue Olympic
weather.

From "Songs of Life and Death."

PANTOUM

A SONG IN THE MALAY MANNER

THE wind brings up the hawthorn's breath,
The sweet airs ripple up the lake :
My soul, my soul is sick to death,
My heart, my heart is like to break.

The sweet airs ripple up the lake,
I hear the thin woods' fluttering :
My heart, my heart is like to break ;
What part have I, alas ! in spring ?

I hear the thin woods' fluttering ;
The brake is brimmed with linnnet-song :
What part have I, alas ! in spring ?
For me, heart's winter is lifelong ;

The brake is brimmed with linnnet-song ;
Clear carols flutter through the trees ;
For me, heart's winter is lifelong ;
I cast my sighs on every breeze.

Clear carols flutter through the trees ;
The new year hovers like a dove :
I cast my sighs on every breeze ;
Spring is no spring, forlorn of love.

The new year hovers like a dove
 Above the breast of the green earth :
 Spring is no spring, forlorn of love ;
 Alike to me are death and birth.

Above the breast of the green earth,
 The soft sky flutters like a flower :
 Alike to me are death and birth ;
 I dig Love's grave in every hour.

The soft sky flutters like a flower
 Along the glory of the hills :
 I dig Love's grave in every hour ;
 I hear Love's dirge in all the rills.

Along the glory of the hills
 Flowers slope into a rim of gold :
 I hear Love's dirge in all the rills ;
 Sad singings haunt me as of old.

Flowers slope into a rim of gold
 Along the marges of the sky :
 Sad singings haunt me as of old ;
 Shall Love come back to me to die ?

Along the marges of the sky
 The birds wing homeward from the East :
 Shall Love come back to me to die ?
 Shall Hope relive, once having ceased ?

The birds wing homeward from the East ;
 I smell spice-breaths upon the air :
 Shall Hope relive, once having ceased ?
 Hope would lie black on my despair.

I smell spice-breaths upon the air ;
The golden Orient-savours pass :
Hope would lie black on my despair,
Like a moon-shadow on the grass.

The golden Orient-savours pass ;
The full spring throbs in all the shade :
Like a moon-shadow on the grass,
My hope into the dusk would fade.

The full spring throbs in all the shade ;
We shall have roses soon, I trow ;
My hope into the dusk would fade ;
Bring lilies on Love's grave to strow.

We shall have roses soon, I trow ;
Soon will the rich red poppies burn :
Bring lilies on Love's grave to strow ;
My hope is fled beyond return.

Soon will the rich red poppies burn ;
Soon will blue iris star the stream :
My hope is fled beyond return ;
Have mine eyes tears for my waste dream ?

Soon will blue iris star the stream ;
Summer will turn the air to wine :
Have mine eyes tears for my waste dream ?
Can songs come from these lips of mine ?

Summer will turn the air to wine.
So full and sweet the mid-spring flowers !
Can songs come from these lips of mine ?
My thoughts are grey as winter-hours.

So full and sweet the mid-spring flowers !
The wind brings up the hawthorn's breath.
My thoughts are grey as winter-hours ;
My soul, my soul is sick to death.

From "Exotica."

THE BALLAD OF THE KING'S DAUGHTER

I

THE still earth sleeps in the summer night,
The air is full of the moon ;
All over the land, in her silver sight,
The roses blossom ruddy and white ;
The world is joyous with June.

There goes a moan in the greenwood hoar,
A moan, but and a wail :
What sighing is that the breezes bore ?
What plaining is that which shrilleth o'er
The note of the nightingale ?

A green glade lies in the middle wood :
Under the moonlight pale,
The greensward glitters many a rood.
Who lies on the grass, bedabbled with blood ?
A knight in his silver mail.

A murdered knight on the greensward lies,
Under the witch-white moon :
The air is thick with his dying sighs ;
The nightbirds flutter about his eyes ;
The corbies over him croon.

II

The night-wind wails,
 The moon-silver pales,
 The stars are faint in the mist ;
 The king's daughter rides over hill and dale,
 Under the arch of the pine-shade pale,
 A lily of gold in the moon-mist's veil.
 And as she rides
 Where the mill-stream glides,
 A raven is sitting on the tree by the brown water,
 With "*Woe to thee ! oh, woe to thee, king's daughter !
 Thou ridest to an evil tryst.*"

The silence quivers,
 The pine-shade shivers,
 Sad flute-notes wake in the gloom.
 The king's daughter rides in the hawthorn track ;
 Gold is her hair on the black steed's back.
 Whose steps are those
 That the echo throws
 Back on the startled ear of the night ?
 What form is that in the moonlight white
 That follows the track of her horse's feet ?
 Whose hands on the red-gold bridle meet ?
 Whose spells are they that such scath have wrought her,
 That the night-winds cry to her, "*Woe, king's daughter !
 Thou ridest to thy place of doom.*"

The moon brims up
 In her pearlèd cup,
 The air grows purple as gore ;
 The stars are red
 With blood to be shed ;

The king's daughter sees in the purple sky
 The wings of the birds of ill omen fly,
 And the brodered lights in the cloud-rack burn
 With a word that is weary and fierce and stern ;
 The shadows of the night in their arms have caught her,
 And the night-winds cry to her, "*Woe, king's daughter !
 Thy pleasant place of life shall never know thee more.*"

Out of the maze
 Of the woodbine ways,
 Into a moonlit glade
 The maiden rides, with the shape of gloom
 Casting a shade on her cheek's rose-bloom,
 A shadow of surely hastening doom.
 What glitter is that of silvered mail,
 Prone on the grass in the moonlight pale ?
 A sword-hilt joined to a broken blade :
 Whose blood is red on the bright brown steel ?
 Who lies in the sleep of death ?
 It is her knight, that was true and leal,
 Whose lips so often her lips have kissed,
 To whom the shades of the night have brought her ;
 And she hears in the echo his dying breath :
 "*Ah ! woe is me for thee, king's daughter !
 Thou comest to a woful tryst.*"

III

She hath alighted from off her steed,
 And she hath raised her lover's head
 And laid it on her knees ;
 The rose of her heart begins to bleed
 And on her breast his blood is red ;
 Her heart begins to freeze.

She hath arisen from off the ground,
 And she hath ta'en the bloodied blade
 And dug with it a grave ;
 She hath diggèd a grave both deep and round
 And there his body hath she laid :
 His soul the dear Christ save !

She hath folded her round her mantle grey
 And she hath stepped into the tomb
 And laid her by his side :
 The dead and the live, the knight and his may,
 They are wedded at last in night and gloom :
 The grave is fair and wide.

IV

The day-flower blows on the eastern hills.
 (Woe is me for the king's daughter !)
 The throstle in the morn
 Sings blithely on the thorn
 And golden is the sun on the grave of the king's daughter.

The wind of dawn through the forest shrills,
 With leaves for the grave of the king's daughter.
 A lily of red gold
 Its flower-flames doth unfold
 And glisters in the sun from the heart of the king's
 daughter.

From "Ballads and Romances."

THE BALLAD OF MAY MARGARET

OH, sweet is the spring in coppice and wold
And the bonny fresh flowers are springing !
May Margaret walks in the merry greenwood,
To hear the blithe birds singing.

May Margaret walks in the heart of the treen,
Under the green boughs straying ;
And she hath met the king of the elves,
Under the lindens playing.

“ Oh, wed thou with me, May Margaret,
All in the merry green Maytime,
And thou shalt dance all the moonlit night
And sleep on flowers in the daytime ! ”

“ O king of the elves, it may not be,
For the sake of the folk that love me ;
I may not be queen of the elfland green,
For the fear of the heaven above me. ”

“ Oh, an thou wilt be the elfland's queen,
Thy robe shall be blue and golden,
And thou shalt drink of the rose-red wine
In blue-bell chalices holden. ”

“O king of the elves, it may not be,
 My father at home would miss me ;
 And if I were queen of the elfland green,
 My mother would never kiss me.”

“Oh, an thou wilt be the elfland’s queen,
 Thy shoon shall be seagreen sendal ;
 Thy thread shall be silk as white as milk
 And snow-white silver thy spindle.”

He hath led her by the lilywhite hand
 Into the hillside palace :
 And he hath given her wine to drink
 Out of the blue-bell chalice.

Now seven long years are over and gone,
 Since the thorn began to blossom ;
 And she hath brought the elf-king a son
 And beareth it on her bosom.

“A boon, a boon, my husband the king,
 For the sake of my babe I cry thee !”
 “Now ask what thou wilt, May Margaret ;
 There’s nothing I may deny thee.”

“Oh, let me go home for a night and a day
 To show my mother her daughter,
 And fetch a priest to my bonny wee babe,
 To sprinkle the holy water !

“Oh, let me go home for a day and a night
 To the little town by the river !
 And we will turn to the merry greenwood
 And dwell with the elves for ever.”

Oh, out of the elfland are they gone,
 Mother and babe together,
 And they are come, in the blithe springtime,
 To the land of the blowing heather.

“Oh, where is my mother I used to kiss
 And my father that erst caressed me?
 They both lie cold in the churchyard mould
 And I have no whither to rest me.

“Oh, where is the dove that I used to love,
 And the lover that used to love me?
 The one is dead, the other is fled;
 But the heaven is left above me.

“I pray thee, sir priest, to christen my babe
 With bell and candle and psalter;
 And I will give up this bonny gold cup,
 To stand on the holy altar.”

“O queen of the elves, it may not be!
 The elf must suffer damnation,
 But if thou wilt bring thy costliest thing,
 As guerdon for its salvation.”

“Oh, surely my life is my costliest thing!
 I give it and never rue it.
 An if thou wilt save my innocent babe,
 The blood of my heart ensue it!”

The priest hath made the sign of the cross,
 The white-robed choristers sing;
 But the babe is dead ere blessing be said,
 May Margaret's costliest thing.

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Oh, drearly and loud she shrieked, as if
The soul from her breast should sever !
And she hath gone to the merry greenwood,
To dwell with the elves for ever.

From "Ballads and Romances."

THE HOUSE OF SORROW

THERE is a story, told with many a rhyme
In dusty tomes of old,
Of how folk sailed, in the fresh ancient time,
Into the sunset's gold :

Into the land of Western hope they sailed,
To seek the soul of joy,
That from the modern life of men had failed,
Crushed by the dull annoy

Of pain and toil ; the gladness of the age,
When Love was king on earth,
And summer, midmost in the winter's rage,
In men's warm hearts had birth :

This did they seek. Beyond the sun, they thought,
Deep in the purple West,
There lay the charm of joyance that they sought,
Awaiting some high quest ;

Charm to be won by earnest souls and pure
And brought anew to life ;
Wherewith provided, one might hope to cure
Men's endless dole and strife.

So, from the chains of love and toil and gold,
The love of wife and maid,—
All human ties had they cast loose,—unrolled
The fluttering sails and weighed

Swift anchor, steering toward the dying day,
Hope in their hearts most high
That they should win the charm that therein lay
For men's sake, ere to die

The angel bade them. And the high heart fell
Not in them, though the wind
Blew fresh and swift for many a day, the swell
Ran pearled the keel behind,

Along the emerald, and the golden dawn
Sank ever sad and pale
Into the westering distance and was gone,
Whenas the dew did fail ;

And nothing met their vision, save the streaks
Of gold and crimson, wound
About the westward, when the dead day's cheeks
Flushed with the sun, that drowned

His glory sullenly in amber foam,
And the dim mists that lay
Along the sapphire marges of the dome
Of heaven, in the grey

Of the pale dawning, and the narrowing wheel
Of seabirds round the sail
And silver fish that played about the keel,
With many a golden scale

And fin of turquoise glancing through the spray :
But never the fair line
Of green and golden shores, the long array
Of palaces divine,

That held the dream of their long venturings,
Rose in the changeful West ;
But still the ship sped with its silver wings
Over the fretted crest

Of the slow ripple ; still the sea was green
And calm on every side,
And the swift course unto their vision keen
Brought but the weary wide

Grey circle bounded by the silver foam ;
And still they looked and hoped
For the fair land where the true joy had home
Wherefor they sighed and groped

Amid the mirk of living. Ever pale
And paler grew the skies,
And less refulgent in its crimson mail
The hour when the day dies :

And every day the dawn was tenderer
And sadder in its white
And rosy pudency ; and still the stir
Of the sad winds of night

Crept closelier on the noontide, till the day
Was hardly much more glad
Than the pale night and morning was as grey
As when the hours are sad

With stormy twilight. So at last they came
When, in the dreaming West,
The scarlet last of sunset's fading flame
Lay on the billows' breast

Still climbing skyward, as it were to catch
The day's last fluttering sigh—
In sight of a fair city, that did match
The tender amethyst sky,

Pale purple with the setting. Very fair
And lucent were the walls ;
And in the evening the enchanted hair
Of some pale star, that falls

From azure heights of mystery, did seem
To compass it about
And girdle it with glammers of a dream,
Webs of desire and doubt :

So that for those sweet clinging veils of mist,
Amber and vaporous,
One might but faintly note the amethyst
And jewels of the house

That rose with many a stately battlement
Out of the pulsing sea,
And could but dimly trace the forms that went,
Most fair and sad to see,

About the silver highways and the quays
Of gold and chrysoprase,
Tender and tristful as the shapes one sees,
In some sweet autumn haze,

Flit, in the gloaming, through the enchanted air ;
When there is none to know,
Save some pale poet, that may never dare
To tell the lovely woe,

The tender ecstasy of sad delight
He has seen pictured there
Upon the canvas of the lingering light,
Under the evening air.

But they that sailed in that enchanted ship,
No whit cast down, drew sail
And came to where the amber-polished lip
Of the gold shore grew pale

Under the kisses of the purpled sea :
And there they landed all ;
And wandering inward through the blazonry
Of portico and hall,

They came to where the soul of sadness sat,
Throned in a woman's form—
Most holy and most lovely—and forgot
In her sweet sight the worm

Of yearning that had gnawed their hearts so long
And knew at last,
From her low whispers and the sad sea's song,
That thither had Life past

As to its goal-point : for the golden thing,
That they had lacked on earth,
Was not (as they had deemed) the god rose-wing
Of gladness and of mirth—

The god of vine-and-ivy-trellised brow
And sunny orient eyes—
For he doth haunt men ever, did they know
But to be linnet-wise :

But that best gift of the Immortal Ones,
That men have lost for aye ;
The pure sweet sadness that we know but once,
And then we pass away :

The mingled love and pain we Sorrow call,
There did it dwell alone,
The tender godlike pain once known to all,
Now but to poets known.

There sit they through the long unwearying years,
At that fair lady's knees,
Lulled by the ripple of her songs and tears
And the sweet sighful breeze

Into forgetting of the things of life
And the weird shapes that fleet
Across its stage of mingled dole and strife ;
For sorrow is so sweet,

There is no gladness that may equal it
Nor any charm of bliss.
And fain would I from the pale seekers wit
Which way the steering is

That may, with helm and sail and oar pursued,
Bring me where she doth dwell,
The lovely lady of that solitude.
Is there no one can tell ?

From "Ballads and Romances."

SHADOW-SOUL

“Destiné à n'avoir que le songe de mon existence, pour moi je ne prétends pas vivre, mais seulement regarder la vie. . . . Des jours pleins de tristesse, l'habitude rêveuse d'une âme comprimée, les longs ennuis qui perpétuent le sentiment du néant de la vie.”—
SENANCOURT.

“On m'a demandé, 'Pourquoi pleurez-vous?' Et quand je l'ai dit, nul n'a pleuré, parce que l'on ne me comprenoit point. . . . Je soupire parce que la vie n'est pas venue jusqu'à moi.”—LAMENNAIS.

THERE is a tale of days of old
Of how a man, by sorcery,
Wrought to defeat the spells that hold
The soul in bonds, and spirit-free
At will to wander, naked-souled,
About the earth and air and sea.

Long thus he went (the legend says)
Until at length a counter-spell,
Flung out upon the worldly ways
From some abysmal crack of hell,
Seized on him and, for all his days,
Doomed him to walk invisible ;

Doomed him to pass among the things
Of life, its joy and strife and dole,
Note all men's hopes and wearings,
Feel all their tides beside him roll,
Yet have in all no communings,
But walk a lone, unfriended soul.

So oftentimes to me it seems
 As if some sad enchantment laid
 Upon my life its hand, that teems
 With many-mingling spells of shade,
 And walled me in a web of dreams,
 Shut out and sole from human aid.

For life has nought to do with me ;
 I stand and watch its pageant pass,
 Stream by with pomp and blazonry
 Of many goodly things. Alas !
 Before my gaze its glories flee,
 Like moon-motes on a dream-lake's glass.

Life's guerdons melt beneath my hands ;
 Its sweets fade from me like a mist :
 I see folk conquer in the lands ;
 I know men crowned for what I missed ;
 I see my barren grey life-sands
 Yield to them gold and amethyst.

My life is such a shadow-thing,—
 So all unmixed with other lives,
 With all men's joy and suffering
 And all the aims for which life strives,—
 I think sometimes each hour must bring
 The nothingness whence it derives.

For men pass by me through the air,
 Hot with bright stress of eager aims
 Or furrowed with a sordid care,
 Seeking sweet ease or blazoned names ;
 Glance at me with a passing stare
 And vanish from me like swift flames.

My soul is like a wandering light
Born of marsh-solitudes and lost,
A hollow flame of heatless white,
Among a ruddy life-warm host
Of living fires,—that may unite
With none, a solitary ghost.

My voice is like the voice of woods,
When the wind shrills between the pines ;
An echo of sad autumn moods,
Wherein the listening ear divines
A tale of endless solitudes,
Dim vistas stretched in shadowy lines.

My eyes are like some lake of dun,
Hid in the shadow of the hills ;
Where all around, by day, the sun
Shines nor may pass athwart its sills
Of firs, but, when the day is done,
The white moon all the silence fills.

I gaze around me as I go,
A pale leaf drifting down the stream ;
Men's lives flit by me on the flow,
Made dark or bright with shade or gleam :
For me, I feel them not, nor know ;
Life passes by me like a dream.

I wander with sad yearning eyes
And heart a-longing for the lost,
(Known but in some dream-Paradise) :
And ever as my way is crossed
By folk, my sad soul shrinks and flies,
Among live men a sighing ghost.

My feet love well to haunt the meads
And wander where the thrush is loud ;
And yet some sad enchantment leads
Me aye among the busy crowd,
And with bent head, my life proceeds,
Where the smoke hovers like a cloud.

And as I wander, once-a-while
I turn to gaze on folk gone by,
That seem to me not wholly vile,
Having some kindred in their eye :
They pass me mutely, and I smile
And my heart pulses like to die.

My heart feeds on its own desire :
The flowers that blossom in my breast
Blow out to frail life and expire,
Unknown, unloved and uncaressed ;
And the pale phantom-haunted fire
Burns inward aye of my unrest.

I see twinned lovers, hand in hand,
Walk in the shadow of the trees ;
Across the gold floor of the sand
Life passes by with melodies :
Alone upon the brink I stand
And hear the murmur of the seas.

I see afar full many a maid
Walk, musing of the love to come ;
But, as I near them, in the shade
Of my sad eyes they read my doom
Of lonely life, and fly afraid
And leave me silent in my gloom.

None may take hold upon my soul :
No spirit flies from men to me ;
Billows of dreams between us roll,
Waves spreading out to a great sea :
Neither in gladness nor in dole
Can our desires conjoin'd be.

I have no heart in their delight ;
My aim has nothing of their aim ;
And yet the same flowers soothe our sight ;
The air that rounds us is the same ;
The same moon haunts our ways by night ;
The same sun rises like a flame.

But over me a charm is cast,
A spell of flowers and fate and fire ;
My hands stretch out through wastes more vast,
My dreams from deeper deeps aspire :
Life throbs around me, like a blast
That sweeps the courses of a lyre.

The merest unregarded thing,
Dropped into this my solitude,
Fills all my soul with echoing
Of dreams, as in some haunted wood
A pebble's splash into a spring
Is by the circling air renewed.

And yet there stirs a great desire
For human aid within my breast ;
Men's doings haunt me like a fire,
My heart throbs loud with their unrest ;
And now and then, as hope draws nigher,
My soul leaps to them, unrepressed.

For, though my feet in silence move
Alone across this waste of hours,
My heart strains hopeward like a dove,
My soul bursts out in passion-flowers ;
My life brims o'er with a great love,
Alone in this wide world of ours.

My full soul quivers with a tide
Of songs ; my head heaves with a hum
Of golden words, that shall divide
The dusk and bid the full light come.
Alas ! men pass me, careless-eyed ;
And still my lips are cold and dumb.

I go beneath the moon at night,
Along the grey deserted streets ;
My heart yearns out in the wan light,
A new hope pulses in its beats ;
Meseems that in the radiance white
My soul a like pale spirit meets ;

As if the trance of the sad star
Were the mute passion of some spright,
That (like my own) some fate did bar
From all life's fruits of dear delight ;
Some soul that aye must mourn afar
And never with its love unite.

Then doth my heart in blossoms ope ;
A new sweet music sweeps along
The courses of my soul ; the scope
Of heaven is peopled with a throng
Of long-pent thoughts and all my hope
Pours forth into a flood of song.

Bytimes, too, as I walk alone,
The mists roll up before my eyes
And unto me strange lights are shown
And many a dream of sapphire skies ;
The world and all its cares are gone ;
I walk awhile in Paradise.

But, in the day unfolded clear,
When the fresh life is all begun,
My soul into the old sad sphere
Falls off ; my dull feet seem to shun
Once more the daylight, and I fear
To face the frankness of the sun.

Alone and dumb, my heart yearns sore ;
I am nigh worn with waste desire :
I stand upon a rocky shore,
Watch life and love sail nigh and nigher ;
Then all pass by for evermore
And leave me by my last hope's pyre.

And yet I grieve not nor complain ;
The time for me has long gone by,
When I could half assuage my pain
By giving it delivery :
My grief within my breast has lain
Unspoken and my eyes are dry.

I am confirmed in this my fate ;
I lock my love within my breast
Nor look to find my soul a mate
Nor match with hope my hope unblest :
I am content to watch and wait,
Impassible in my unrest.

Long have I ceased the idle stress
 Toward the rending of my gloom :
 I am made whole in loneliness ;
 I lay no blame on this my doom ;
 I curse not, if I do not bless :
 My life is silent as the tomb.

And yet (methinks) some day of days,
 The silence, that doth wrap me round,
 Shall at its heart of soundless ways
 With some faint echoing resound
 Of my own heart-cry, and the rays
 Of a like light in it be found.

Haply, one day these songs of mine
 Some world-worn mortal shall console
 With savour of the bitter wine
 Of tears crushed out from a man's dole ;
 And he shall say, tears in his eyne,
There was great love in this man's soul !

*Ay, bitter crushed-out wine of love,
 Pressed out upon his every word ;
 A note as of some sad-voiced dove,
 As of some white unfriended bird,
 Dwelling alone in some dim grove,
 Whose song no man hath ever heard ;*

*But only the pale trackless sea
 And the clear trances of the moon
 Have quivered to his melody ;
 And for the rapture of the tune,
 Their attributes, sad sanctity
 And peace, they gave to him for boon ;*

*So that his sadness, in the womb
Of the mild piteous years, has grown
A holy thing ; and from the tomb,
Where in the shade he lies alone,
(As was in life his lonely doom)
The seed of his desire has blown*

*Into a flower above his grave,
Full of most fair and holy scent ;
Most powerful and sweet to save
And to heal men from dreariment.
And I shall turn me in my grave
And fall to sleep again, content.*

From "Songs of Life and Death."

DOUBLE BALLAD

OF THE SINGERS OF THE TIME

WHY are our songs like the moan of the main,
When the wild winds buffet it to and fro,
(Our brothers ask us again and again)
A weary burden of hopes laid low?
Have birds left singing or flowers to blow?
Is life cast down from its fair estate?
This I answer them—nothing mo'—
Songs and singers are out of date.

What shall we sing of? Our hearts are fain,
Our bosoms burn with a sterile glow.
Shall we sing of the sordid strife for gain,
For shameful honour, for wealth and woe,
Hunger and luxury,—weeds that throw
Up from one seeding their flowers of hate?
Can we tune our lutes to these themes? Ah, no!
Songs and singers are out of date.

Our songs should be of faith without stain,
Of haughty honour and deaths that sow
The seeds of life on the battle-plain,
Of loves unsullied and eyes that show
The fair white soul in the deeps below.
Where are they, these that our songs await
To wake to joyance? Doth any know?
Songs and singers are out of date.

What have we done with meadow and lane ?

Where are the flowers and the hawthorn-snow ?

Acres of brick in the pitiless rain,—

These are our gardens for thorpe and stow.

Summer has left us long ago,

Turned to the lands where the turtles mate

And the crickets chirp in the wild-rose row.

Songs and singers are out of date.

We sit and sing to a world in pain ;

Our heart-strings quiver sadly and slow :

But, aye and anon, the murmurous strain

Swells up to a clangour of strife and throe,

And the folk that hearken, or friend or foe,

Are ware that the stress of the time is great,

And say to themselves, as they come and go,

Songs and singers are out of date.

Winter holds us, body and brain :

Ice is over our being's flow ;

Song is a flower that will droop and wane,

If it have no heaven toward which to grow.

Faith and beauty are dead, I trow ;

Nothing is left but fear and fate :

Men are weary of hope ; and so

Songs and singers are out of date.

From "Exotica."

THE GRAVE OF MY SONGS

BYTIMES, from out the stillness of my days,
Grown silent, as they nigh
The darkness and the undiscovered ways,
I hear folk question why
The fountain of my songs, that once ran high
And full, is fallen dry ;
Why in that concert of the fields and hills
Of poesy, that fills
Our English heaven with music never mute,
There is one broken lute,
One voiceless bird,
One linnet of the woods, whose wilding note,
Erst in the morning hours of some that heard
Held sweet, is dumb within his stricken throat,
Ere yet the glory of the noon be o'er,—
Whose song, though day still shines, is heard no more.
—They ask in very idleness, nor pause
For answer ; yet the cause
Who will may know :
My voice is dumb for weariness of woe.

I am no night-bird piping in the dark ;
For me, as for the lark,
The sun must rise to set me on the wing :
Except hope shine on me, I cannot sing :

I cannot carol in a lightless land
Nor hymn the dawn, except it be at hand,‡
Love was my dayspring and my evenglow,
The sun that set my April blossoming,
That made my summer carolful ; and lo !
My daystar set in darkness long ago.

My sun lies buried in a nameless tomb,
Midmost a mighty desert of the dead,
Where the great city's gloom
Lengthens its skirt of shadow overhead,
Darkening the morning and the evening red.
There, in the narrow room,
After long pain and many a piteous day
Of hopeless waiting for the hopeless end,
Since love nor care might bend
The iron course of fore-appointed doom,
Her weary head to lay
She came, for whom my songs were sung of yore,
For whom the barrens of my life ran o'er
With lush and lavish bloom.

Since that sad day, my songs are turned to sighs ;
The flowerage of my heart is all fordone :
But she, the eternal rest so hardly won,
At peace she lies
And sleeps as well, frail lover of the sun,
Beneath our English skies,
Our pallid skies of watchet-chequered dun,
As if she lay where the rose-laurels run
Adown Grenada's hillside, torrent-wise,
Or where, amidst the Andalusian vines,
The rosy gold of Seville's turrets shines.

Ah, what is left us of the dear-loved dead ?
The dainty gold-fledged head,
The eyes' soft grey,
From which the dreams of childhood never fled ;
The mouth's rose-campion red,
The lips, on which the faint smile sat alway,
Sad as the break of April's youngest day ;
The rose-blush cheeks and forehead, garlanded
With clustering curls astray,
Like woodbine tendrils in the flush of May ;
The voice, too soft for joy, too sweet for pain,
That in its blithest tone
Had yet some note of never-ceasing moan,
Some half-enchanted strain,
As of some disembodied spirit, fain
To be set free again
From this waste world that never was its own,
Since in some clime unknown
The airs and flames of heaven to it were blown ?
These hath Time taken back to its treasury,
In other worlds, mayhap, alas ! but ne'er
In this of night and day reborn to be :
Nay, all are gone and even memory
Will fade of what they were.
Might we but deem some lapse of land and sea,
Some brighter sky
Should bring these back to heart and ear and eye,
These that in death's hand lie !
Ah God, to see the daisies springing there,
Year after year, as if life ne'er should die,
And see no sign and know no reason why
Her life that was so fair,
Her soul, that was so sweet, so heavens-high,
Is faded out for e'er
Into the deserts of the abysmal air !

Could we but hope the all-engrossing earth,
That for the eternal rest
Took back her blighted beauty to its breast,
Might yet enrich our dearth
With some unknown, enchanted wonder-birth
Of blossom, brilliant as her starry eyes,
Sweet as her balmy breath,
Some flowerage of heaven, defying death,
Wherein our yearning memory might retrace
The frankness of her face,
In whose bright beauty thought might recognise
The spirit-prime of her lost loveliness,
Born as it were again
In some new earth, delivered from the press
Of mortal grossness by the purge of pain,—
Or might we deem the unresponsive air,
—That bore her gentle spirit far away
And scattered it for aye
Beyond the confines of the night and day,
To all the winds of being, nor would e'er
Vouchsafe to our despair
One echo of her voice's dulcet strain,—
Should yet grow great with graciousness and bear
Some mystic birth of music strange and fair,
Some seraph-song of Paradisal bird,
Some melody of mortals never heard,
Wherein her silver speech
And the far memory of her voice might reach
Our longing ears and witness to our faith,
She was not all disfeatured by the scaith
Of unrespective death,
That something of her sweetness yet survives
In interstellar lands
Or in the sunset-calm of spirit-lives,
Nor was all scattered by the 'scape of breath !

Nay, hope is vain ; in vain our lifted hands !
 In vain our cryings storm the heaven's stair :
 There are no ears to hearken anywhere,
 No lips to speak in answer to our prayer.
 The heavens are empty as the empty air ;
 The Gods are dead as she is dead, and nought
 Abides of her but thought.

In one man's brain, who soon himself must go
 To join the unnumbered nations that lie low
 In that untravelled land where thought is none
 And sight is senseless there of star and sun.

One sole man's thought against the grim array
 Of Death and Fate her only hope and stay,
 Her one

Frail-seeming fortalice ! And yet, how slight
 Soe'er it show against the iron might
 Of the blind Titans of oblivion,
 Methinks it shall suffice for many a day
 To hinder Time's decay

From blotting out her traces ; yea, despite
 The myriad graves that let her from the light,
 Th' innumerable throngs

That overcrowd her of the nameless dead,
 Remembrance still shall blossom o'er her head
 And guard her gentle memory from Time's wrongs ;

For in that narrow bed
 With her my heart lies buried, and my songs.

If you should find the hidden violet there,
 Softening the smoky air

With that sad scent of hers, that seems to hold
 The very soul of tears, or see the mould
 Lit with the lucent gold

Of thronging primrose,—if the breeze should bear
 The roses' royal breath
 And lilies white,
 The fair flower-angels with the heart of light,
 With jessamines unite
 To glorify that darkling garth of death,—
 Think not these are but flowers,
 The common creatures of the sun and showers :
 Nay, these are no mere scions of the spring,
 No summer's blossoming,
 The tired earth's homage to the lengthening hours ;
 These are the secret treasures of my prime,
 My hoards of love and rhyme,
 Which, did she live, were songs, but, she being dead,
 Are flowers above her head.

If you should marvel there to hear the lark
 Sunder the morning-dark
 With that shrill clarion call of his for light,
 Out of the deeps of night,
 Or mark the mavis and the ousel make
 Their wild free music there for April's sake,—
 Nay, if some magic in the air should bring
 The nightingales to sing
 Her requiem who rests beneath the earth
 In this grim graveyard city of her birth,
 Deem not but birds are these,
 But simple songsters of the woods and leas.
 These are no common choristers of air,
 The singing sprites of heaven's lowest stair,
 That hymn the spring and summer everywhere ;
 They are the tuneful creatures of my soul,
 My thoughts of joy and dole,

Which, did she live, were music wild and free,
Pageant and jubilee,
Such as had overflowed land and sea
With tides of song, but, she being dead, I gave
To glorify her grave.

From "Songs of Life and Death."

SONNETS

J. B. COROT

Died 22nd February 1875

BEFORE the earliest violet he died,
Who loved the new green and the stress of spring
So tenderly. He knew that March must bring
The primrose by the brook and all the wide
Green spaces of the forest glorified
With scent and singing, when each passing wing
Would call him and each burst of blossoming :
He knew he could not die in the springtide.
Yet he was weary, for his task was done
And sleep seemed sweet unto the tired eyes :
Weary ! for many a year he had seen the sun
Arise ; so in the season of the snows
He put off life—ere spring could interpose
To hold him back—and went where Gautier lies.

À STÉPHANE MALLARMÉ

AMI, te souviens-tu des longues causeries,
Nous promenant le soir le long du Serpentin,
Suivant, les yeux ravis, le rayon argenté,
Qui, revêtant les tons roses des rêveries,
S'en allait, lentement, le long des éclaircies ?
Douce, la nuit venait sur l'ombrage serein
Et dans l'eau satinée, aux moirages d'étain,
Les gaseliers piquaient leurs flammes adoucies.
Cependant, nous causions, pliés de la fin du jour,
Du grand et puissant Art, cette noble maîtresse
Qui serre nos deux cœurs de son fécond amour.
Sur nos lèvres—refrain qui revenait sans cesse—
Chantaient les vers aimés, les noms des grands amis ;
Londres pour nous ce soir redevenait Paris.

From "Les Soirs de Londres."

HYDE PARK

IL est un oasis dans la noire cité,
Nid fleurant où celui,—dont l'esprit rêveur ose,
Dans ton Babel infect, que la fumée arrose,
O Londres, ô séjour lugubre et enchanté,
Songer parfois à l'Art et la sainte beauté,—
Vient la soir, un instant, à l'heure où le ciel rose
Guérit du gazon vert la diurne chlorose,
Se tremper dans le calme et dans l'immensité.
Parmi la foule, hélas ! qui crie et se lutine,
Espérant vainement de tromper la rigueur
Du chien noir du travail qui tout près d'eux chemine,
Seul et silencieux, il passe, lui, rêveur :
Et quand la nuit gravit la pente cristalline,
Les vers germent, joyeux, dans son esprit en fleur.

From " Les Soirs de Londres."

SARVARTHASIDDHA-BUDDHA

I

THE desert of the unaccomplished years
Fills the round compass of our careful eyes
And still, from age to age, the same suns rise
And life troops past, a masque of smiles and tears :
The same void hopes vie with the same vain fears
And in the grey sad circuit of the skies,
To the monotonous music of our sighs,
We plod toward the goal that never nears.
Ah, who shall solve us of the dreary days,
The unlived life and the tormenting dreams,
That on the happy blank of easeful night
Paint evermore for us the backward ways
And the old mirage, with its cheating streams,
And urge us back into the unwon fight ?

SARVARTHASIDDHA-BUDDHA

II

WE turn for comfort to the wise of old,
For tidings of the land that lies ahead,
The land to which their firmer feet have led,
Hymning its shores of amethyst and gold.
We ask ; the answer comes back stern and cold ;
“Gird up your loins ! Rest is not for the dead.
Beyond the graveyard and the evening-red,
New lives and ever yet new lives unfold.”
—Ye speak in vain. If rest be not from life,
What reck we of new worlds and clearer air,
Of brighter suns and skies of deeper blue,
If life and all its weariness be there ?
Is there no sage of all we turn unto
Will guide us to the guerdon of our strife ?

SARVARTHASIDDHA-BUDDHA

III

YES, there is one : for the sad sons of man,
That languish in the deserts, travail-worn,
Five times five hundred years ago was born,
Under those Orient skies, from whence began
All light, a saviour from the triple ban
Of birth and death and life renewed forlorn.
Third of the Christs he came to those who mourn :
Prometheus, Hercules had led the van.
His scriptures were the forest and the fen :
From the dead flower he learnt and the spent night
The lesson of the eternal nothingness,
How what is best is ceasing from the light
And putting off life's raiment of duress,
And taught it to the weary race of men.

SARVARTHASIDDHA-BUDDHA

IV

HE did not mock the battle-broken soul
With promise of vain heavens beyond the tomb,
As who should think to break the boding gloom
Of stormful skies, uplifting to the pole
Gilt suns and tinsel stars. Unto their dole,
Who batten on life's galls, he knew no doom
Is dread as that which in death's darkling womb
Rewrites life's endless and accursèd scroll.
Wherefore he taught that to abstain is best,
Seeing that to those, who have their hope in nought,
Peace quicklier comes and that eternal rest,
Wherein enspherèd thou, Siddartha, art,
Chief of the high sad souls that sit apart,
Throned in their incommunicable thought.

CON UN ESEMPLARE DELLA
DIVINA COMMEDIA

AMICO, in questo libro che ti dono,
La voce angelica del dottor mio,
De' lai mie' maestro e quasi dio,
Dell' alte cose e con vario suono,
Ch' ora sembr' arpeggiar ed ora tuono,
Ragiona, ne' suoi canti oltra pregio,
Poeta, à te poeta il travaglio,
Tesor di tutti chi poeti sono,
Offro, affinchè fra noi due impegno
D' amicizia ed anchè segno sia
Del camminar commune nella Via
Dell' alme nostre, varie d' ingegno
Più che le luci sulle sfere spunte,
Ma nondimen nel variar congiunte.

TRANSLATION OF THE FOREGOING

WITH A COPY OF THE DIVINA COMMEDIA

FRIEND,¹ in this book I proffer thee hereby,
The angelic voice of him my song obeys,
The well-nigh God and master of my lays,
With various speech, of matters rare and high,
That harp notes now, now thunder doth outvie,
Discourseth in his verses passing praise.
This treasured work of all who bear the bays,
A poet, to thee, poet, offer I,
That evermore a pledge betwixt us twain
Of friendship and to boot a sign it may
Be of the common travel in the Way
Of our two souls, that various of strain
More than in heaven benighted star and star,
But none the less conjoined in variance are.

¹ Arthur O'Shaughnessy.

OMAR KHEYYAM

O THOU, the Orient morning's nightingale,
That, from the darkness of the Long Ago,
Thy note of unpropitiab!e woe
Cast'st out upon the time-traversing gale,
—Its burden still life's lamentable tale,
Too late come hither and too soon to go,
Whence brought and whither bounden none doth know
Nor why thrust forth into this world of wail,—
We, thy sad brethren of the Western lands,
SONS OF THE SECRET of this latter day,
We, who have sailed with thee the sea of tears,
Have trod with thee the BLOOD-DEVOURING WAY,
We, thy soul's mates, with thee join hearts and hands
Across the abysses of eight hundred years.

AD DANTEM

To thee, my master, thee, my shining one,
Whose solitary face, immovable,
Burning athwart the midmost glooms of Hell,
Calls up stern shadows of the things undone,—
To thee, immortal, shining like the sun
In the blue heart of heaven's clearest bell,
Circled with radiances ineffable,—
These pale sad flowers I bring,—how hardly won
From this grey night of modern lovelessness,
How hardly and how wearily God knows !
These at thy feet I lay, whose hues confess
Thy mighty shade, so haply they may shine
With some pale reflex of that light divine
Which ripples round thine own supernal rose.

WITH A COPY OF HENRY VAUGHAN'S
SACRED POEMS

LAY down thy burden at this gate, and knock.
What if the world without be dark and drear?
For there be fountains of refreshment here
Sweeter than all the runnels of the rock.
Hark! even to thy hand upon the lock
A wilding warble answers, loud and clear,
That falls as fain upon the heart of fear
As shepherds' songs unto the folded flock.
This is the quiet wood-church of the soul.
Be thankful, heart, to him betimes that stole,
Some Easter morning, through the golden door—
Haply ajar for early prayer to rise—
And brought thee back from that song-flowered shore
These haunting harmonies of Paradise.

BEATRICE

SWEET, I have sung of thee in many modes,
If haply singing I might ease my pain ;
And still the unwearying fates bring me again
Back by the flowery and the thorny roads
To the old goal-point : still my soul forbodes
The coming of the sad sweet dreams of old
And in my Occident the sunset's gold
Grows dim and sad above the lost abodes.
Dear, had I loved thee less or loved life more,
Had had more hope in men, in love less faith,
I should not now be seeking, as of yore,
For the faint sadness of dream-violets' breath ;
I should not now be weaving, o'er and o'er,
These bitter melodies of Love and Death.

INDIAN SUMMER

I

I SAID, "The time of grief is overpast :
The mists of morning hold the plains no more ;
The flowers of spring are dead ; the woods that wore
The silver suits of summer o'er them cast
Are stripped and bare before the wintry blast.
Is it for thee to weary and implore
The ruthless gods, to beat against their door
For ever and for ever to the last ?
Rise and be strong ; yonder the new life lies.
Who knows but haply, past the sand-hills traced
Bounding the prospect, destiny have placed
A sunny land of flowers and sapphire skies,
For balm of hearts and cure of loves laid waste ?
Up, and leave weeping to a woman's eyes !"

INDIAN SUMMER

II

THEN turned I sadly to the olden signs
By which I had so long lived lingering ;
The faded woods, the birds long ceased to sing,
The withered grapes dried on the weathered vines
And the thin rill that through the time-worn lines
Of grey-leaved herbs fled, faintly murmuring
Its ghostly memories of the songs of spring,
Weird whispers of the wind among the pines.
Farewell I bade them all, with heart as sad
Well-nigh as when love left me long ago,
And turned into the distance. Long I had
Their murmur in my ears, as long and slow
The melancholy way did spread and wind
That left the memories of youth behind.

INDIAN SUMMER

III

AT last a new land opened on my view :
No phantom of the dear dead spring of old
It was, but a fair land of autumn gold
And corn-fields sloping to a sea of blue :
And I looked down upon its face and knew
The autumn land of which my heart had told,
The land where love at last should be consoled
And balm flower forth among life's leaves of rue.
A sunset land it was ; and long and sweet,
The shadows of the setting lay on it :
And through the long fair valleys there did flit
Strange birds with pale gold wings, that did repeat
The loveliest songs whereof men aye had wit ;
And over all the legend "Peace" was writ.

INDIAN SUMMER

IV

AND as I gazed on it, my heart was filled
With rapture of the sudden cease of pain :
And in my spirit, ever and again,
There rang the golden legend, sweet and stilled
With speech of birds ; and in the pauses rilled
Fair fountains through the green peace of the plain,
That with the tinkle of their golden rain
Made carol to the songs the linnets trilled ;
Whilst, over all, the waves upon the shore
Throbbled with a music, sad but very sweet,
That had in it the melodies of yore,
Softened, as when the angels do repeat,
In heaven, to souls in rapture of new birth,
The names that they have sadly borne on earth.

TROPIC FLOWER

As I went walking in the air one day—
Sadly enough—a thought laid hold on me
With flower-soft hands and would not set me free.
It was, meseemed, as if a rose of May
Blew suddenly against a wintry way
Of snow and barren boughs ; for I could see
No cause why such a lovely light should be
In my dull soul, nor how my heart's dismay
Should have lent life to any pleasant thing.
But, with remembering, presently I knew
That this was but the scarlet flowering
Of some most bitter aloe-root that grew
In my sick soul an hundred years and drew
All my lost summers to its single spring.

EVOCATION

SECOND SONNET

How many times, sweetheart, how many times
I have made running rivers of my sighs,
Poured out my yearning into melodies
Of love, that on the torrent of my rhymes
My thought might voyage to those golden climes
Of mystery, jewelled o'er with sapphire skies,
Where thy feet walk and make life Paradise !
And unto thee, mayhap, as 'twere the chimes
Of some far dream-bell fluttering in the air,
The echo of my great desire has won,
Like to a sigh of spirits far away ;
And thou, with some still sadness filled and fair,
Hast for a dream-space stood and watched the sun
And the clear colours fading from the day.

FEMME FELLAH DE LANDELLE

O THOU that hold'st the desert in thine eyes,
With that long look into the world of dreams,
As of deep yearning for the distant streams
Of some green oasis that haply lies
Beyond the torrid glow of orient skies
In the blue distance ! I have known thee long
In that dim dreamland, where the fluted song
Of nightingales is mixed with dulcet sighs
Of scented winds and balm of mystic flowers ;
And in the white warm moonlight, all bestrewn
About the trellised woodways and the bowers
Vine-clustered, I have often known the tune
Of birds swell sweetlier and the hurrying hours
Halt, as thy face grew clear beneath the moon.

INDIAN ISLE

I FOUND in dreams a dwelling of delight
And did possess it with my soul's desire :
An island, cinctured with the radiant fire
Of orient noons and girt about with white
Of wave-washed reefs, wherein there slumbered bright,
Ah ! dream-bright bays, that brought the blue sky nigher
Down to my wish ; and many a flower-sheathed spire
Of mystic splendid trees bare up that height
Of imminent azure, flowered above the earth.
There, for my spirit's ease, my hope I laid,
To dwell within that golden-hearted shade
And drink the splendour of the things that be,
Renewing ever with the new sun's birth
And rounded with the slumber of the sea.

LIFE UNLIVED

How many months, how many a weary year
My soul had stood upon that brink of days,
Straining dim eyes into the treacherous haze
For signs of life's beginning. Far and near
The grey mist floated, like a shadow-mere,
Beyond hope's bounds ; and in the lapsing ways,
Pale phantoms flitted, seeming to my gaze
The portents of the coming hope and fear.
" Surely," I said, " life shall rise up at last,
Shall sweep me by with pageant and delight !"
But, as I spoke, the waste shook with a blast
Of cries and clamours of a mighty fight ;
Then all was still. Upon me fell the night,
And a voice whispered to me, " Life is past."

ENGLAND'S HOPE: KITCHENER
OF KHARTOUM

WHELP of the lion-breed of Wellington ;
Careless to fit the date unto the deed
Or trumpet forth, that all who run may read,
His valiant worth to every mother's son ;
In the lost field, as in the victory won,
Steadfast alike, unrecking whose the meed,
So but the achievement of his country's need
And honour saved attend on duty done :
Diluting action not with vain debate ;
Contemptuous of Fortune's good and ill ;
Not blown about, as is the unstable soul,
Hither and thither with each shift of fate,
But constant as the compass to the pole,
Fast founded on th' unconquerable will.

November 1900.

ANGEL DEATH

Lo ! I have made an end of many things,
Singing ; yet never have I sung to thee,
Belovèd angel, that by life's sad sea
Standest star-crowned, whilst all the dusk air rings
With the quick spirit-pulse of viewless wings :
No voice of mine has lifted litany
To thee with song, no hand of mine set free
The soul of praise that slumbers in the strings.
For am I not to thee as one (in this)
That lingers by some shining water-deeps,
When the slow tide sings in its moon-stilled sleeps,
Until his heart-strings catch its harmonies
And his life pulses to the time it keeps :
And yet thereof no thing he speaks, ywis ?

AD ZOÏLOS

CHIDE me who will for that my song is sad
And all my fancy follows on the wave
That bears our little being to the grave !
When did it fail that those—whose lives were glad
For lack of light and want of virtue had
To know the mystery and the hair-hung glaive
That shadow all our life so seeming brave—
The accusing wail of those that weep forbad ?
Peace, triflers ! Peace, dull ears and heedless eyne !
Yet haply time unto your foolish fears
Shall yield a mocking áccord and the years
Falling full-fated on these days of mine,
Crush from the grapes of grief a bitter wine
Of laughters, sadder than the saddest tears.

EXIT

THIS is my House of Dreams—a house of shade,
Built with the fleeting visions of the night :
Here have I set my youth and all its white
Sad mem'ries—in this dwelling that I made
With idle rhyme, as lonely fancy bade.
If any wonder at the strange sad might
The God of Vision holds upon my sight
And set himself my weak song to upbraid 73
For all the wailing notes therein that teem,
I pray him of his favour that to lands
Of sunnier clime he wend ; for things that seem
Are here the things of life and give commands
To living ; for a dream is on my hands
And on my life the shadow of a dream.

THE END

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